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Your friendly guide to technology

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Find where
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PLUS



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From the Editor

Like an excited child before Christmas, I am now counting down the sleeps (47 as I write this) until Windows 10 is released on 29 July. It will, I think, come to be regarded as one of Microsoft's best ever operating systems.

But that doesn't mean upgrading will be the right choice for everyone, even though it's free for Windows 7 and 8 users. So over the next few months we'll give you all the advice you need to make an informed decision, no matter what operating system you currently use (including Linux). In this issue, you can check if your existing software will be compatible with Windows 10 (page 57), and try its new tools without installing it (page 35). Whether



or not you plan to upgrade, you should also follow the tips in our Cover Feature (page 50) on deleting huge files.

Daniel Booth

editor@computeractive.co.uk

PS: We've got a new book out: *The Definitive Guide to Free Software*. Turn to page 34 for more details.



THIS ISSUE IN NUMBERS

96%

Proportion of police requests for personal data approved between 2012 and 2014 - [p9](#)



\$1500

Maximum ransom demanded by new Android malware - [p14](#)

40 million

Number of household objects in the UK that are web connected - [p49](#)

HOW TO USE SNIPCA URLs

We use snipcas to turn long URLs that are hard to type into ones that are short and simple. They aren't websites themselves, which means they won't be recognised if you type them into Google. Instead, you need to type them into your browser address bar, then press Enter. Doing this will take you to the correct website.

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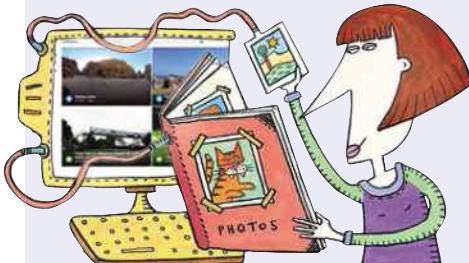
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Computeractive offer of the fortnight

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Broadband revolution! Quit your contract without fees



You can now switch your broadband provider if your speeds are too low without incurring penalty fees.

The rules, introduced by Ofcom, are part of sweeping proposals to give more power to the consumer. ISPs must now also make their adverts easier to understand, handle complaints better and make it easier and quicker for customers to move to a new provider (see box below).

Previously, customers had to pay a fee to terminate a contract once the first three

months had passed, even if they had received a poor service or slow speeds. This often left millions of people trapped in the internet slow lane for over a year.

But Ofcom's new "strengthened" Code of Practice states that customers will be able to cancel without paying a penny if speeds fall below "acceptable levels" and if they "suffer problems that cannot be resolved".

Likewise, mobile-phone owners will be able to change network in a "swift and hassle-free" process if their

service is deemed unsatisfactory. Ofcom has also told networks to abolish hidden charges when switching.

SPEEDS YOU SHOULD GET

The rules should help to clarify what broadband speeds a customer is entitled to. At the moment, ISPs must give new customers a range of expected speeds, such as between 4 and 20Mbps.

But ISPs tend to bury any references to the minimum guaranteed access line speed (MGALS), which is the fastest speed that the slowest 10 per

COMMENT

We've often slated Ofcom for not showing enough ambition, so we're encouraged by the wide-reaching nature of these changes. But we expect resistance from ISPs, who will go hunting for loopholes that keep customers paying over the odds and switching needlessly difficult - without actually breaking the new rules. Also, they may recoup the money lost through the ending of fees by increasing overall broadband prices. So while these changes should be good news for customers, there may be unforeseen consequences that will prove less welcome.

cent of customers achieve. This is a more important figure because if your speeds fall below it, you are allowed to cancel - although until now only in the first 90 days.

Before you cancel you must give your ISP a "reasonable" opportunity to fix the problem. This could mean allowing the company to spend a few weeks working on it.

The new rules apply to ISPs using digital subscriber line (DSL) technology. This includes BT, EE, Sky and TalkTalk, but not Virgin Media, which provides broadband through cables.

WHAT ISPs MUST NOW DO

- 1 Provide "clear and accurate information" in their adverts to make it easier for customers to compare prices with rival companies.
- 2 Make the process of switching supplier "straightforward", guaranteeing a "smooth transfer".

- 3 Simplify their contract terms to make them more transparent, and abolish hidden charges when dissatisfied customers want to leave.
- 4 Handle complaints better, setting out "simple steps" for customers to follow when things go wrong.

Ofcom

 **You'll like this...** Google has updated Chrome to stop Adobe Flash draining laptop battery life (www.snipca.com/16899)

 **...but not this** Three has backtracked on its promise not to raise prices mid-contract (www.snipca.com/16887)

Windows 10: Microsoft *really* wants you to reserve your upgrade

Microsoft has stepped up efforts to persuade people to reserve their free upgrade to Windows 10 before it is released on 29 July.

Since 1 June it has been adding an icon in the shape of the Windows logo to the Taskbar of people running Windows 7 and 8 (see screenshot). Clicking it displays the message 'Windows 10 is coming. Get it for free!' and prompts you to 'reserve' your upgrade by entering your email address.

Now Microsoft is asking users to reserve their upgrade during the Windows 8.1 setup process, before the Desktop appears. Anyone who has



recently bought a Windows 8.1 computer will find it hard to miss this prompt.

By reserving your free upgrade you will be able to download Windows 10 before 29 July, beating the rush on the day of release when download speeds will be slower. You

won't be able to install the operating system until 29 July, though. You don't need to reserve your upgrade, though, to receive it.

Microsoft says it will notify you when Windows 10 has downloaded, letting you install it "straight away" or at "a time that's convenient for you".

Windows 7 and 8 users will get Windows 10 free, while XP and Vista users have to pay \$119 (£78) for the Home edition or \$199 (£131) for Pro. Upgrading from Windows 10 Home to Pro will cost \$99 (£65).

REMOVE THE ICON

Several *Computeractive* readers emailed us to ask whether the offer to reserve a free upgrade is a scam. It isn't,

though it is certainly a clever bit of marketing from Microsoft. Removing the icon isn't easy, but we explain how on page 46.

Now eBay and PayPal will cold-call you

eBay and PayPal have changed their small print to allow them to make automated marketing calls, emails and text messages to customers.

The rules only apply to US customers, but there are fears they will be extended to other countries, including the UK. eBay's rules were implemented in mid-June, while PayPal's kick in at the beginning of July.

The updated PayPal user agreement states: "You consent to receive autodialed or pre-recorded calls and text messages from PayPal at any telephone number that you have provided us or that we have otherwise obtained".

PayPal says these calls could be "offers and promotions" as well as "surveys or

questionnaires". The agreement also says that PayPal may share your phone numbers with the company's "affiliates", raising the prospect of other firms bombarding you with calls.

The company has come under fire in the US for not including an opt-out option. Instead, the conditions simply

say to avoid receiving the calls you should close your account.

PayPal reacted to the criticism by saying that anyone wishing to opt out can do so by phoning customer services.

Both companies may face legal challenges to their new agreements. New York state attorney general Eric Schneiderman has asked the company for more information about the new policies, which his Internet Bureau Chief Kathleen McGee said "fail to respect consumer choice and privacy preferences".

Persistent cold-calling is as big a problem in the US as it is here. The US's Federal Communications Commission wants to legalise technology that blocks such calls.



IN BRIEF

VODAFONE OFFERS NEW BROADBAND DEALS

Vodafone is once again selling home broadband, having pulled out of the market in 2011. There are three packages: Ultrafast Fibre (up to 76Mbps), Superfast Fibre (up to 38Mbps) and ADSL (up to 17Mbps). Prices are considerably cheaper for existing Vodafone customers, starting at £2.50 per month, though the services will be available only in selected parts of the UK until 2016, when it launches nationwide. Find out more at www.vodafone.co.uk/broadband.

NEW WEBSITE FOR PEOPLE WHO LOVE TECH

A new website aims to celebrate the way technology is changing the way we work and live. Launched by Dennis Publishing, the company that owns *Computeractive*, Alphr (www.alphr.com) covers all types of cutting-edge technology, from driverless cars to virtual-reality headsets to wearable devices. You can follow it on Twitter at [@alphr_dotcom](https://twitter.com/alphr_dotcom).

alphr

Tomorrow's world

Here's another technical term you may have to get used to: PoWiFi ('power over Wi-Fi'). Researchers at the University of Washington in the US have built a prototype router to show how Wi-Fi can wirelessly charge devices such as tablets and laptops over a range of 30 feet, while simultaneously providing internet access. This academic paper explains the science: www.snipca.com/16830.

IN BRIEF

USE SKYPE WITHOUT DOWNLOADING IT

Microsoft has released a web-only version of Skype to all UK users, letting you make video calls on any PC without having to download the software. All your existing conversations and contacts will load when you first sign in. It's currently available as a **beta** and works in the Chrome, Safari, Firefox and Internet Explorer browsers, though not on Chromebooks. Read Skype's blog for more details: www.snipca.com/16842.

FREE AMAZON POSTAGE – BUT ONLY IN THE US!

Amazon has introduced free delivery for some lightweight items, with no minimum spend stipulated, but only in the US. Shoppers no longer have to pay postage for items that cost less than \$10 and weigh under eight ounces (0.22kg). Products included in the 'Fulfillment by Amazon Small and Light' scheme include make-up, phone accessories and earplugs. They are delivered within four to eight business days. No word yet on whether the scheme will launch in the UK.

Smile for Apple! Cars photograph the UK for Street View rival

Apple is sending a fleet of cars across England and Ireland to photograph streets in order to add images to its Maps apps. The cars started taking photos on 15 June, and will continue until the 30th.

With images of streets across the country, Apple's Maps will be able to offer a similar service to Google's Street View. Rumours that the company was planning such a move have been rife since February when camera-equipped vans belonging to Apple were spotted in San Francisco.

Not every area in England is being photographed. On its website (<http://maps.apple.com/vehicles>) Apple said that its cars will be capturing images of Essex, Hertfordshire, Kent, Surrey, the West Midlands, Worcestershire and London, including the towns and cities of St Albans, Watford, Dartford, Birmingham, Epsom and Solihull. In Ireland, the cars will capture Dublin and surrounding areas.

There's no information on



when during the 15-day period cars will be in a given location.

Apple will be keen to avoid the privacy blunders Google committed while creating Street View, most notably when it secretly collected people's private data, including emails and passwords, when photographing streets.

Google had to pay a \$7m (£4.6m) fine in the US, but escaped penalty in the UK because the Information Commissioner's Office said the privacy breach hadn't caused sufficient harm.

Apple confirmed it will blur the faces of people and vehicle licence plates, as Google already does in Street View. If you have any questions about Apple's privacy policy, you can email them to the company at AppleMapsVehicles@apple.com.

The news about Apple's cars came in the same week that the company announced it was adding a new 'Transit' view to its Maps app. It will include directions on how to navigate large cities, including London, New York, Paris and Berlin, using public transport.

Scam warnings after paper driving licence moves online

Motoring groups have warned the public about possible online scams after the DVLA scrapped the green paper driving licence. Drivers' details will now be stored on the internet in a bid to save money.

Drivers can view their details at www.gov.uk/view-driving-licence, and generate a 'check code' that can be shared with people who need to see them, such as an employer or car-hire company. You can also download and print a summary.

The Government says the changes will cut red tape and save up to £8m, as well as make the lives of drivers easier. But the AA said the change "could cause



confusion". A spokesman told the *South Wales Evening Post*: "Not all drivers are comfortable with computers and surfing online. People will also be concerned at who exactly will be able to get access to your electronic driver record, and the potential for fraud and scams".

The RAC also expressed reservations, saying: "In the dash to digital, ministers must remember those left behind. Of the 20 million car-owning households in Britain, almost one in 10 are without internet access".

The DVLA is recommending that drivers destroy the paper licence because it no longer has any legal status – unlike the plastic photocard, which you should keep. But before you do so the AA is advising that you check that the details, including penalty points, are identical to those on the DVLA's electronic system.

The DVLA explains all the changes on its website at www.snipca.com/16847.

Do the police have too much access to our data?

Privacy groups are worried by a report that shows the police get approval for 96 per cent of requests to access personal data

A report from privacy campaign group Big Brother Watch has revealed how many times UK police forces asked to access details of personal texts, emails, calls and web searches between 2012 and 2014. The data, gathered under freedom of information laws, shows that 733,237 requests were made, amounting to one every two minutes. Under current legislation, the police have to submit a request within their own force. Only four per cent of these were refused, the report found.

Almost a quarter of all requests were made by the Metropolitan Police (177,287), the highest in the country, followed by the West Midlands Police (99,444; 13 per cent).

The scale of these requests has led to calls for the police's powers to be curbed. In its report (available as a PDF at www.snipca.com/16807), Big



Home Office spokesman told the BBC that the current law "helps to disrupt terrorist plots, smash criminal networks and keep us safe".

Currently, police can gather 'who, where and when' information, but not the actual content. So, for example, they can see when a suspect sent a text, and to whom, but not what the

visit online".

Big Brother Watch is also unhappy about the disparity in the number of requests approved across the UK's police forces. For example, Essex Police was refused 28 per cent of its 19,541 requests, the highest in the UK, while the Metropolitan Police was denied only 18 per cent of its requests.

However, in some cases, almost every request made was accepted: forces in Cheshire, Cleveland, Warwickshire, Northumbria and Hertfordshire all had fewer than 0.5 per cent of their requests denied.

The number of refusals is important because the inability of police and security services to access data has been cited by Government as a key reason for its revival of a bill to give crime-fighting agencies more power to intercept the content of calls and messages.

But Big Brother Watch says that the small number of rejections suggests the police

“Police use data to paint a vivid and intrusive picture of our lives, including who our friends are”

Brother Watch makes five proposals, including the introduction of "transparency reports" from the police to show how requests are approved, and the requirement that judges make the final decision to grant police access.

The police and security services would vigorously oppose such measures. A

message contained. They argue that this access to data is proportionate to the threat, but Big Brother Watch sees it differently, claiming it lets the police "paint a vivid and intrusive picture of our lives, including who our friends, family and work colleagues are, where we travel, live, work, socialise and holiday, and the websites we

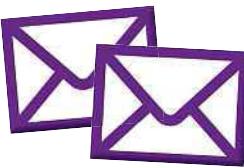
THE FACTS

- UK police forces made 733,237 requests for email, phone and web data between 2012 and 2014
- Overall, only four per cent of requests were denied, though these figures vary greatly between forces
- Privacy campaigners Big Brother Watch want the police to file 'transparency reports' explaining how they request data

don't need greater powers. MPs across the political spectrum agree. David Davis, a former Conservative shadow Home Secretary, said that the "astonishing range" of rejection levels means there's something wrong with how requests are made. Davis claimed that police access to data is "out of control", while Labour MP Tom Watson said that the police risk "losing public legitimacy" for the surveillance they carry out.

Pressure is likely to mount on the police to explain the discrepancy between approved requests across the country. It seems reasonable that we should know what officers in Essex do so differently to their colleagues in Cheshire. But there is probably no widespread desire to cut the number of requests being made. Many people will think that if it takes 733,000 requests to keep us all safe from terrorist plots, then it's a price worth paying.

Letters



Tell us what's on your mind

Email: letters@computeractive.co.uk

Facebook: www.facebook.com/computeractive

Twitter: [@ComputerActive](https://www.twitter.com/computeractive)

Sorry Amazon, I won't spend £79 on Prime

 Further to your news article about Amazon doubling the free-delivery minimum order value, I believe Amazon are shooting themselves in the foot. I used to go straight to Amazon whenever I was looking to buy an item or two. But now I shop around on other sites for the best overall deals for items under £20.

Like many other people I have received numerous cards through the post promoting Amazon's 30-day free trial for Prime, but it's of no interest to me. In fact, I use the cards for cleaning the frost off my car windscreen in winter. I most certainly will not consider paying £79 per annum for Amazon's films because they do not interest me at all. And I doubt I would spend anywhere near £79 per year on delivery costs.

Amazon's ploy of getting customers to pay £79 is not going to cut any ice with me, and it may push potential customers in other directions. Think again Amazon!

Kelvin Meyler

 In reference to Amazon losing business over its new £20 free-delivery limit. I regularly used to give Amazon sellers a rating. I no longer do this, and regrettably I've stopped writing reviews about products. Why is this? Freely giving Amazon valuable feedback about sellers and products was a way of saying thank you for the free delivery, like a *quid pro quo* arrangement. This became inappropriate when the limit for free delivery was raised to £10, and doubly so now that it's £20 (not including book orders). Will it be £30 tomorrow?

Greedy Amazon has taken full advantage of the generosity of public spirit when asking customers for valuable feedback information that enhances their business. It's no longer appropriate for customers to freely give Amazon something for nothing.

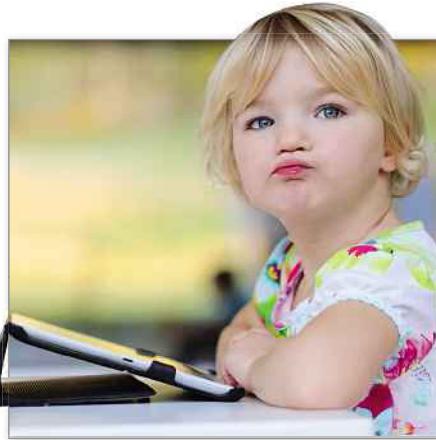
If Amazon customers really do want to send a message so that they will take notice, give sellers zero feedback. That will have an impact on their profitability. I deeply regret having to say this because seller ratings and reviews can be a very helpful guide to buying.

Cliff Evans

Parents shouldn't shove tablets in front of kids

 I was saddened to read in News, Issue 451, that so many children now own a tablet, and shocked that 11 per cent of toddlers have one. Obviously, children need to be taught about computers and technology at school, but when they get home other things should interest them. When I was growing up in the Sixties my mother always stopped me watching TV when I got home from school. I moaned about this a lot, but it did me good in the long term. I played outside more, I did my homework properly, and I read more books. Result: a successful and happy life.

I worry that parents are simply shoving



a tablet in front of children to keep them quiet – while the parents themselves stare at their own devices for hours! I hope this so-called 'tablet generation' doesn't grow up to feel isolated from other people, and detached from reality.

Francis Armstrong

My clumsy courier was a sloppy Santa

 I refer to the "Careless couriers left me with a soggy bottom" letter in Issue 450. In it, Ian Nicholson bemoans – among other things – couriers who don't give time for you to get to the front door. Lest anyone thinks that he was perhaps exaggerating, read on.

I just managed to catch a courier who was disappearing down the drive. I told him that I hadn't heard the doorbell. He replied: "I didn't try as I didn't know if it worked". Another courier once said he "didn't see the doorbell". But worst of all, I was expecting a parcel containing a Christmas present for one of my family. I found this note posted through the letterbox: "parcel behind gate". I couldn't understand how the courier could have put it there; the locked gate is solid oak about seven-feet high, with the house on one side and a high fence on the other. On visiting the garden side of the gate I saw the parcel (about two-feet square)

Belt - a 'waist' of time and money

 I share Stuart Andrews' scepticism about tech gimmicks (The Final Straw, Issue 451). I thought he was making up the Belt - until I searched for it online: www.wearbelty.com. According to the nonsense of the homepage, it uses "waistline trend analysis" (whatever that is!) to help you stay healthy. It gets even sillier. Apparently, it nudges you every hour to remind you to get up and stretch your legs. Most men of my age don't require a belt to do that; they can rely on their

dearly beloved to stop them lazing on the sofa!

Anyone who buys the Belt clearly has too much money, and deserves to be taxed at a new rate for the terminally gullible (99 per cent should do it). But a little word of warning about gimmicks: sometimes they can turn out to be tomorrow's must-have gadgets. I've dismissed many devices as gimmicks that won't catch on, including e-readers and touchscreen phones. Obviously, I was wrong. But if I'm proved wrong about the Belt's pointlessness, then I promise to run around Trafalgar Square with my trousers round my ankles.

Alan Evans



lying on the ground. It had clearly been dropped over the gate. The contents were wrecked beyond repair. And as it was raining, the box – and more importantly the books inside – were ruined.

I would like to have asked the courier how he would like to have had a

Christmas present destined for him treated in a similar manner.

Roger Castle-Smith



Let down by 'grouchy' service in local PC shops

✉ My own experience of local PC-repair shops is very different to those I've read from fellow readers in *Computeractive*. I have no doubt that the people working in these shops are experts, but I always get the feeling they are looking down on me for not being able to fix the problem I'm explaining. Sometimes, I get the impression they'd rather carry on watching the TV behind the counter than fix what's wrong. Maybe I've just been unlucky with my choice of shops, but customer service has been grouchy and inattentive.

It's the exact opposite in the big stores, of course. They are friendlier and more enthusiastic, but lack the technical know-how that comes with years of taking apart and rebuilding computing kit. What we need are medium-sized stores run by passionate experts who don't treat customers as unwanted intrusions.

Michael Chadwick

Memo to Microsoft: fewer marketing gimmicks please

✉ I'm looking forward to Windows 10, but I do wish Microsoft would stop with the silly marketing gimmicks. You say in News, Issue 451, that Microsoft wants each of us to "reserve" our copy of the operating system. Surely this is just a ruse to get our email addresses, so they can spam us with endless emails about how great Windows 10 is. Call me a cynical old goat, but I bet I'm right.

Bernard Joyce

Four reasons why you should upgrade to Windows 10

✉ I reserved my copy of Windows 10 as soon as I saw the icon appear in my taskbar. The reason for my instant

STAR LETTER

Use the web? Over-75s are too busy having fun

✉ I wasn't surprised to read in Issue 451 that 33 per cent of people aged over 75 have never been online. I've just hit that age myself, and I've been using the web for ages, so nobody needs to persuade me of the benefits it brings. But many of my friends and relatives simply refuse to believe that the internet is for them.

Let me give you some examples. I have two brothers and two cousins, all aged over 80. Not one has ever switched on a computer, let alone browsed the web. When I tell them I talk to my overseas relatives on Skype, they look at me as though I'm a time-travelling wizard from the 37th century. And yet all four are intelligent people with active lives. I regularly urge them to use the web, but I never have much luck because they always say they don't have the time. They're too busy doing things in 'real life', as they call it. Their perception of the web is that it's for people who have given up on life. Maybe they associate it with overweight people staring at a PC



screen for hours? If so, then who can blame them if they prefer country walks, ballroom dancing and nights down the bingo?

Another reason many over-75s are less likely to use the web is that some of them are in retirement homes, where playing cards and bingo is more fun and sociable than watching stupid cat videos on YouTube. When they hit this age, people have a rich lifetime of experiences they can discuss with their friends. Younger people have still got it all in front of them, so they have less to talk about with their peers. It's why they stare at their phones all day, every day.

Charles Gates

The Star Letter writer wins a *Computeractive* mug!



decision is that I've been using the Technical Preview since March, and it has impressed me a lot. I didn't think Microsoft could make anything better than Windows 7, which I was using before, but I was wrong. Here are four reasons why all *Computeractive* readers should upgrade:

1: The Start menu is easier to use. It's perfect for beginners and experts alike.

2: The Edge browser is far superior to Internet Explorer. I love how clean and simple it looks.

3: Controlling your PC using your voice (the Cortana tool) is great fun. It's still a bit rough around the edges, but soon we'll all be saying hello to Cortana every morning.

4: It's free! What have you got to lose?

I hope almost everyone upgrades to Windows 10, no matter what version they currently use. It would be nice to feel like part of a new generation of Windows users all operating the same system. At the moment it's too fragmented, with XP users moaning about the end of support, Vista users moaning that they are ignored, Windows 7 users feeling smug that their system still works well, and Windows 8 users regretting ever upgrading. That makes it difficult for Microsoft to keep everyone happy. Here's my prediction: by this time next year, almost nobody will be left on XP or Vista, and almost everybody on 7 and 8 will have upgraded to 10. I certainly hope that happens.

Derek Key

Consumeractive

Can I be billed for a non-existent internet service?

Q I moved house in February, informing my ISP Fuel Broadband, and was told there'd be no problem transferring the service. But despite receiving various start dates in March, in April, I never got a new internet service, so I cancelled the contract. I've now received a bill for £27.68 for services provided in April. Do I have to pay?

Dennis Allen



A Fuel Broadband hasn't provided any services to Dennis so he doesn't have to pay this ISP a penny. We've advised him to contact the company again explaining this, and also to point out that because it failed to honour the contract it signed with him (to provide a broadband service at his new home from March), he's within his rights to cancel without penalty. But he should also ask the company if there are any outstanding charges from his old property because he will be liable for those. If Fuel refuses to respond to Dennis and continues to send him bills, we've told him to get back in touch with us and we'll pursue the matter.

CASE CLOSED

Do I have to upgrade my PC to get free sat-nav maps?

Q In December, I bought a Garmin nüvi 2569LMT-D sat-nav from Halfords with free lifetime map updates. I was told that new maps were free to download for the "useful life of the device". When I tried to update the sat-nav in April, I discovered Garmin no longer supports XP, so I can't update. Am I legally required to update my operating system to obtain the map updates or can I get redress from Halfords or Garmin?

Don McBet



A This case highlights the problem of expecting a device to always be compatible with others. Don doesn't have to update his operating system but unfortunately he's got no case against either Halfords or Garmin.

The sat-nav's not inherently faulty, so Halfords isn't responsible for helping Don. He can't sue Garmin for breach of the 'life-time' guarantee, because it's no longer supporting the XP operating system. A third-party

manufacturer (in this case Garmin) can't be held liable for changes made by another manufacturer or software developer over which they have no control. The truth is, even Microsoft doesn't support XP any longer. Plus, the 'life-time' guarantee hasn't been broken by Garmin because he can still get updates.

We can only suggest Don asks a friend or colleague if he can update his sat-nav on a PC operating Windows 7 or 8, which Garmin does still support.

CASE ONGOING

Can Vibox refuse to put right goods that were not as described?

Q I bought an expensive Box-X desktop PC from Vibox in August 2012. Recently, I installed two new computer games and noticed that the fan was working overtime and the PC was overheating. When I went online to see what the problem was, I found out that the PC should have been fitted with two fans but mine only has one. Vibox agreed that a fan was missing but said because of the length of time I'd owned the PC, it wouldn't help. Is there anything I can do?

Peter Stocks



A Yes, we think that Peter needs to fight this. The basic legal argument on his side under the Sale of Goods Act is the PC is "not as described", and even Vibox agrees this is the case. However, what's complicating the matter is Vibox's argument that he should've informed it earlier. The company appears to be relying on a section of SOGA that says that if a "reasonable time" has passed,

the customer has had ample time to examine goods and identify any problems. If the goods are not returned to the retailer within this time, the customer is "deemed to have accepted" them (read the legislation at www snipca.com/16625).

Essentially, this disallows the customer from seeking redress at a later date.

But we think this doesn't apply

in Peter's case, which hinges on whether he could reasonably be expected to know that the PC was missing a fan. And we don't think he should be expected to know. This is exactly why SOGA gives consumers up to six years (five in Scotland) to seek redress, because inherent problems may not be found for some time.

He could reject the PC and get a pro rata refund, ask Vibox for damages (essentially some money off the original sale price) or if he prefers, a fan to replace the missing one.

We've contacted Vibox on his behalf about his claim and put this legal argument to it. We'll update you if the company responds to us.

CASE CLOSED



We stand up for your legal rights

✉ Contact us so we can investigate your case

Email: consumeractive@computeractive.co.uk

Write: Consumeractive, Computeractive, 30 Cleveland Street, London W1T 4JD

Please include both your phone number and address.

Unfortunately, we can't reply to all your letters.

Can I force HP to honour its warranty?

Q I bought an Envy 17 Notebook from PC World in November 2014. I had problems with my optical drive, so HP sent me a replacement. Then HP resolved another problem, but I was then told that in future I'd have to contact PC World because of a "special arrangement for warranty support on HP machines". I am not happy about this. Can I force HP to honour its warranty and not PC World?

Jim Turner

A This is a turn-up for the books – most people get fobbed off with the old 'talk to the manufacturer' line, even when the customer doesn't have to or the warranty is no longer valid. So we checked and PC World does have a special arrangement with HP.



The company said: "Our relationship with HP is such that we will service/repair/investigate HP laptops within that first 12-month 'warranty period' in most cases".

This may make it difficult for Jim to bypass PC World. But he could argue that he wasn't made aware of this arrangement between the two companies when buying the laptop. Had he realised he may have refused to buy the laptop from PC World. Therefore his contract for repairs under the warranty, which is a



legal agreement, still remains with HP not PC World. If he decides to argue this we've asked him to let us know if he is successful.

CASE CLOSED

CASE UPDATES



Wanted: your reports of nuisance calls and texts

Have you been bombarded by cold-calling companies recently? If so, the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) wants to hear from you.

The data-protection regulator was given new powers in April to crack down on cold-calling companies. In order to take action the ICO no longer needs to prove that calls or texts had caused people "substantial damage or distress" (see 'Question of the Fortnight', Issue 445). This high burden of proof had meant many companies were able to slip through the net; over the past four years the ICO has only managed to successfully prosecute nine companies.

These powers should make it easier for the ICO to hit companies with the maximum £500,000 fine, but it needs more cases to investigate. An ICO spokesman told us: "Initially there was a spike in the number of companies being reported in April when there was a lot of publicity about the changes. Complaints have dropped, but we don't know if that's because the number of unsolicited calls and texts has fallen".

You can report nuisance calls and spam texts, as well as silent phone calls, to the ICO on its website (<https://ico.org.uk/concerns/marketing>), or get advice via its helpline on 0303 123 1113 (charged at local rate) or 01625 545 745 (national rate).



THIS WILL COME IN USEFUL

Travel companies and ABTA

ABTA

Contact details:
<http://abta.com/contact-us>
Twitter: [@ABTAtravel](https://twitter.com/ABTAtravel)

Expedia

0330 123 1235
Email: <http://support.expedia.co.uk/app/ask>
Twitter: [@ExpediaUK](https://twitter.com/ExpediaUK)

First Choice

0203 451 2720
Complaints:
www.snipca.com/16734
Twitter: [@FirstChoiceUK](https://twitter.com/FirstChoiceUK)

Kuoni

0800 092 4444
Contact form:
www.snipca.com/16572

Saga Holidays

Phone numbers:
www.snipca.com/16578
Twitter: [@SagaHolidaysUK](https://twitter.com/SagaHolidaysUK)

Thomas Cook

01733 224808

Complaints:
www.thomascook.com/customer-relations
Twitter: [@ThomasCookUK](https://twitter.com/ThomasCookUK)

Thomson

024 7628 2228

Complaints:
www.snipca.com/16565

Virgin Holidays

0844 557 3865

Complaints:
www.snipca.com/16573
Twitter: [@VirginHolidays](https://twitter.com/VirginHolidays)



Protect Your Tech

Scams and threats to avoid, plus new security tools

WATCH OUT FOR...

'FBI porn' Android ransomware

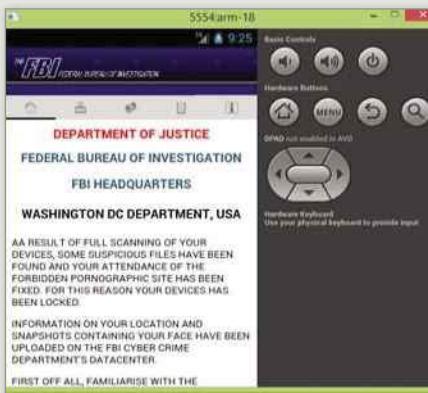
What happened?

Thousands of Android users were targeted by a new wave of ransomware that uses a particularly cynical trick to torment victims.

When the device is infected, it displays a fake message from the FBI saying you've broken the law by visiting "forbidden" pornographic websites (see screenshot). As a result, the message says, the device has been locked. It demands a ransom of \$500 (about £330) to unlock it.

To make the warning appear genuine, the ransomware adds screenshots of porn websites to your browsing history, making it look like you have visited them.

Understandably, rather than pay, most people will try to unlock the device – but this is where the hackers



add insult to injury. The ransomware detects any attempt to unlock the device, and responds by increasing its demand to \$1500 (£980).

The ransomware is being spread in emails that contain zipped files claiming to be an update for Adobe

Flash Player. By clicking the email attachment, the victim unwittingly downloads the malware, which is installed as a video player.

What should you do?

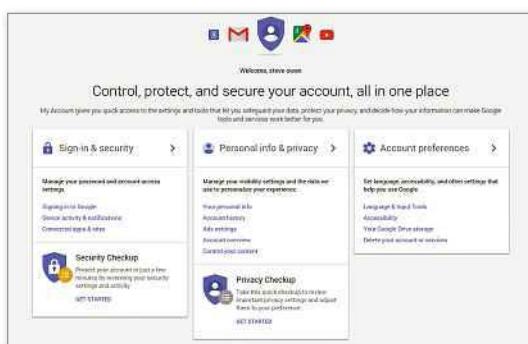
The most important piece of advice is one we've said many times, and will no doubt regularly repeat in future: never open an attachment in an email you weren't expecting.

If you are infected, you may be able to manually remove the ransomware by booting your device in [safe mode](#), then navigating to the applications manager. How this is done varies depending on which device you have, but you should find instructions by searching on Google. Here's how to do it on a Nexus device, for example: www.snipca.com/16793.

New tools

During Google's early days, it usually lived up to its motto of 'Don't be evil'. It wanted to be seen as a new kind of company – quite unlike older, more exploitative corporate beasts. That positive aura has long since gone, but deep down the company still wants to be regarded as one of the good guys, and is trying to be more transparent about how it uses your data.

As part of that drive, it has revamped its My Account page (see screenshot), where you can tweak security settings for any of your Google accounts. To begin, click the 'Get Started' link in either the Security or Privacy box. This will explain how to set up



[two-factor authentication](#), limit what information you share online, and block targeted adverts tailored to your interests. You should also visit Google's new Privacy site (<http://privacy.google.com>), where it goes into further detail about how and why it collects your data. For more info read Google's Official Blog: www.snipca.com/16792.

ScamWatch

READERS WARN READERS

£72 driving licence con

I needed to renew my driving licence, so looked online. Top of the search results was the website www.uklicenceservices.co.uk, which looks official. It says it "helps" you apply for a replacement. I answered all their questions, but towards the end I started to get suspicious, especially when it requested a payment of £72 by credit card. I deleted all my information and closed the site. I then went to the DVLA site (www.gov.uk/contact-the-dvla), and was given an 0300 number to ring. I gave my details, which the operator confirmed, then I paid only £20.

Tony Casserly

 Warn your fellow readers about scams at letters@computeractive.co.uk



pcspecialist

PC Specialist recommends Windows



Get a PC that's more **you**

Rutilus

- AMD Athlon X4 860K
- ASUS® A88XM-PLUS
- 8GB HyperX FURY RAM
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- 1TB Hard Drive
- **Windows 8.1**
- 3 Year Standard Warranty

THIS SPEC
FROM

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- ASUS® H81-Gamer
- 8GB HyperX FURY RAM
- 2GB NVIDIA® GeForce® GTX 960
- 120GB Kingston SSD
- 1TB Hard Drive
- **Windows 8.1**
- 3 Year Standard Warranty

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- 4GB NVIDIA® GeForce® GTX 970
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- 6GB NVIDIA® GeForce™ GTX980Ti
- 6GB NVIDIA® GeForce™ GTX980Ti
- 240GB HyperX SAVAGE SSD
- 1TB Western Digital Black Hard Drive
- **Windows 8.1**
- 3 Years Warranty

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- Intel® Core™ i7-4720HQ
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- 2GB NVIDIA® GeForce® GTX 960M
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- 240GB Kingston SSD
- 1TB Hard Drive
- **Windows 8.1**
- 3 Year Standard Warranty

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CLIPBOARD TOOL

Clipboard Master 4.0

www.snipca.com/16927

What you need: Windows XP, Vista, 7 or 8/8.1



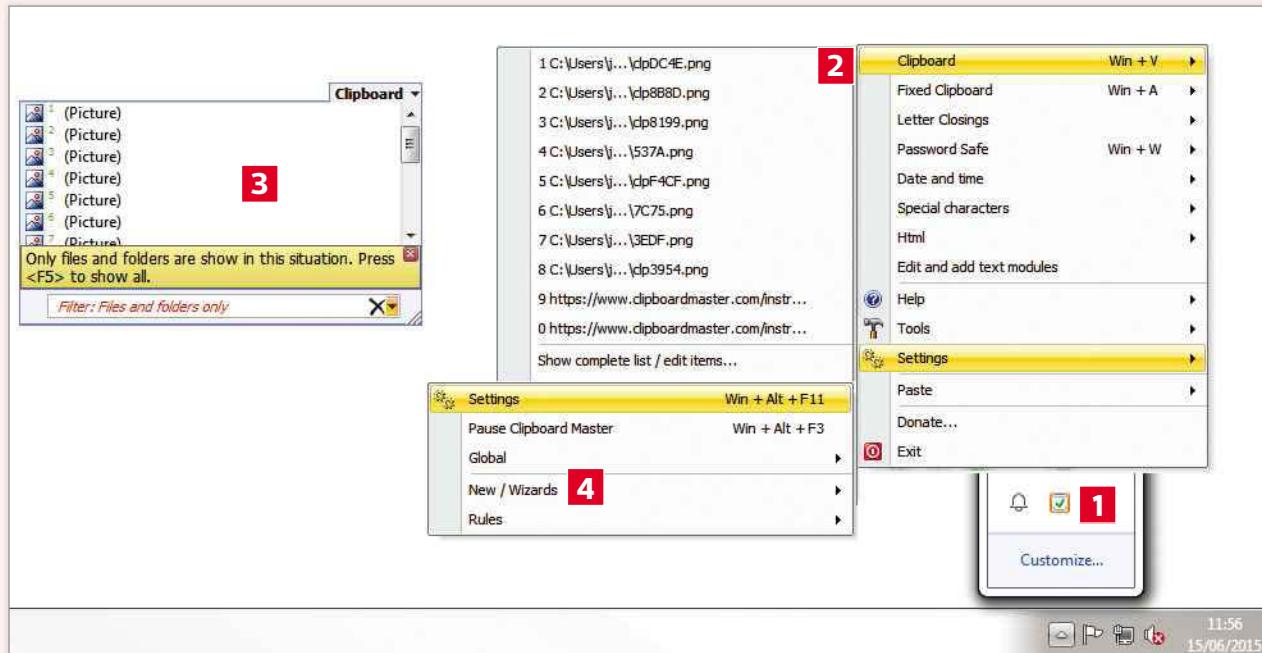
Windows' default Clipboard tool is useful but seriously limited. It can only hold one clipping at a time, so as soon as you copy a new chunk of text, image or other item to it, your previous clipping is overwritten. This makes it all too easy to overwrite items accidentally by pressing **Ctrl+C** (copy) when you meant to press **Ctrl+V** (paste).

In our 'Use your PC as a Secretary' feature (Issue 451), we showed you how to reduce clipboard-overwriting mishaps using the free tool ClipX (www.snipca.com/16928), which lets you access a list of clippings. The new version of Clipboard Master is even more useful than ClipX, because it lets you organise saved clippings into folders, set up keyboard shortcuts for your most-used clippings and even print photos you've saved to the clipboard, simply by pressing **Ctrl+P**.

In return for being more powerful than ClipX, Clipboard

Master requires a little more setup work from you. Click Download, then save and run the installer, which doesn't include any unwanted extras. When you first launch the program you're asked to choose 'Quick configuration' preferences that include a keyboard shortcut for opening the clipboard, whether you want to paste text with or without formatting, and even whether to enable simple calculations in the clipboard.

Stick with default preferences for now (for example, **Win+V** to open the clipboard), and use the configuration wizard as a kind of tutorial. The 'More...' links at the bottom-left of the wizard currently don't work; instead, use the excellent English-language version of the website (originally German) to learn more about the tool's many features (www.snipca.com/16929).



1 Clipboard Master adds an icon to your system tray and runs in the background by default. Click the icon to open a menu of options, including Settings and Exit.

2 Click Clipboard to see your 10 most recently copied items, then click an item to open it. Click Fixed Clipboard to see a fixed window of your most-copied items.

3 Press **Win+V** at any time to open a complete list of recently copied items in a separate window. The default list just includes files and folders; press **F5** to see more items.

4 To set up keyboard shortcuts and automatic actions, click the system-tray icon, then Settings, then 'New / Wizards'. Click Global to configure right-click options.



BROWSER

SlimBrowser 7.0

www.snipca.com/16931

What you need: Windows XP, Vista, 7 or 8/8.1

The overhauled new version of FlashPeak's SlimBrowser is quite a contrast with Maxthon Nitro, the stripped-back browser we featured in Best Free Software in Issue 451. For one thing, SlimBrowser isn't slim. Unlike Nitro, it's packed with menus, toolbars, media features and other built-in clutter that makes it feel very old-fashioned. On the upside, it has an advert-blocker built in and it's very small – a mere 3.7MB. There's also a portable version that you can run safely from a USB stick on any computer running Windows XP or later.

If you go for the installable version, make sure to untick Set As Default Browser in the setup wizard, then click No in the Default Browser pop-up. This isn't a bad browser, but it's not good enough to be your default.



SYSTEM TOOL

Wise PC 1stAid

www.snipca.com/16932

What you need: Windows XP, Vista, 7 or 8/8.1

Fix Windows problems and irritations such as broken Outlook links, corrupted Desktop icons and unresponsive Windows tools with this small new program from the maker of PC-cleaning suite Wise Care 365. Click a pre-set problem in the program window (such as Cannot Open Task Manager) to try fixing it automatically, or type in the Seek Answers box to search for help on the Wise Care forum.

Click Free Download and run the installer, which doesn't include any unwanted extras – a refreshing change from our past attempts to install Wise Care software.

WHAT SHOULD I DOWNLOAD?

We tell you what software to use

What's the best calendar software with notification tools?

Q

Years ago I had a calendar program that put notifications on my Desktop when important events were coming up. Is anything like this available now, either free or paid-for? Many thanks.

Malcolm Wheatley

A

The best calendar tools are free online, and the best examples are made by the biggest names in software:

Microsoft's Outlook.com Calendar (www.outlook.com; click the little grid of squares and then click Calendar) and Google Calendar (www.google.com/calendar). So if you have a Microsoft or Google account, you already have a brilliant calendar tool at your disposal.

Both tools can easily be configured to send notifications to your Desktop and email, as well as to your tablet and phone.

Google's Help site explains how to create notifications (www.snipca.com/16933), and Microsoft has tips on using Outlook.com Calendar (www.snipca.com/16935).

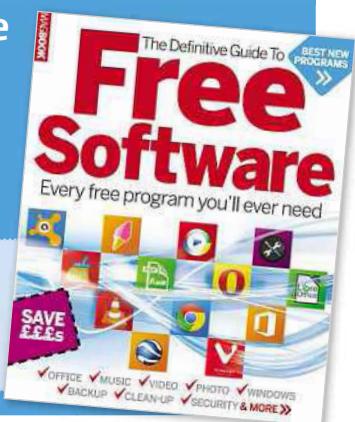
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Reviews

New products tested by our experts

SMARTWATCH | From £299 from www.snipca.com/16771

Apple Watch

Apple aims to move your digital life from your pocket to your wrist

Apple is renowned for revolutionary products like the iPhone and iPad. This time it isn't breaking new ground: other smartwatches exist, including the Pebble and products based on Google's Android Wear. But the Apple Watch (not iWatch) has instantly become the most popular, but you can only use it if you also own an iPhone, to which it connects wirelessly.

The 42mm face (from £339) feels average for a man's or unisex watch, and the rounded edges make it easy to wear under a cuff. There's a 38mm alternative, which costs slightly less (£299). Each size comes in three versions: Apple Watch Sport, (made of aluminium); Apple Watch (stainless steel); and Apple Watch Edition (solid gold from a preposterous £8,000).

The Watch and Watch Sport are priced from £479 and £299 respectively. Functionally, they're identical, but the Watch has a sapphire crystal front and ceramic back, while the Sport has toughened glass and a plastic back. But these differences aren't obvious, and neither had scratches after a month of testing. The rear of the face is the most futuristic-looking part, with sensors that measure the pulse in your wrist. It's all so precisely made that even the Sport exudes luxury.

Strap, home screen and notifications

The Sport Band strap (see below) is made from a comfortable rubbery plastic. You can choose the colour (see them at www.snipca.com/16808), but black only comes

on a special black Watch (or 'Space Grey' as Apple calls it). Any colour is available separately for £39. Leather and metal straps can cost as much as £379, which is why even the mid-range Watch can set you back up to £949. That's a lot for something that will be obsolete in a few years – very different from buying a Swiss watch.

Of course, the Apple Watch does more than a quality Swiss watch. Raising your wrist brings the full-colour LCD to life with one of 10 clock faces. They include Modular (a digital-style multi-function display); X-Large (for easy reading); and Astronomy (which shows the Earth, Moon or Solar System aligned to the date and time). Apple isn't letting anyone else make faces, but this may change.

“It's an accessory rather than an essential device”

Press the 'digital crown' (which looks like the winder on a standard watch) and you arrive at the Home screen, with a cloud of tiny app icons (see main image). Turning the crown zooms in: this is the Watch's standard way of zooming or scrolling, to keep your fingers out of the way, but you can also drag and tap on the screen. The built-in apps are what you'd expect and include Mail, Messages, Calendar, and Photos. There's no App Store icon, because you add new apps using your iPhone. In the Apple Watch app you can choose which apps appear on the Watch face, change their settings, and rearrange them on your Home screen.



Most importantly, you can set which notifications are sent to your Watch, including emails, text messages, events, and – with extra apps – tweets, weather alerts and more (Facebook support is not currently available). To alert you, the Watch taps you on the wrist. It's more discrete than a phone vibration, and yet harder to miss. This is used for more than just notifications. The Maps app shows you where you are, then you can ask Apple's voice-controlled tool Siri for directions to another location. While you walk there, the Watch taps you to inform you about each turn. It's much better than clutching your iPhone.

Camera, TV & music apps

The Watch doesn't have a camera, but the Camera app connects to your iPhone's and you can tap it to take a photo (although not video). It's handy with a stand or tripod. You can also control an Apple TV box, and use the Watch to pay at tills when Apple Pay reaches the UK.

Swiping up from the bottom of the clock face reveals 'Glances' – status screens for up to 20 apps. The first provides mute, Airplane mode and Do Not Disturb, and the second controls music playback on your iPhone. You can



APPS TO TRY ON YOUR APPLE WATCH

More than 4,000 apps already support the Watch, although most offer quite limited features on the tiny screen. Here are some we found particularly useful...

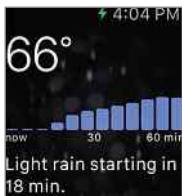


Calculator for Apple Watch

There's no built-in calculator, so get this free one (www.snipca.com/16798) with scientific functions.

Dark Sky

This paid-for weather app is worth the money (£2.99 from www.snipca.com/16796) for its extra features, including alerts when rain is imminent.

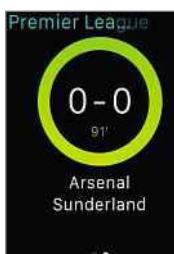


Cloud Baby Monitor

Place an iPad or other Apple camera device in the nursery, then view live on your Watch or get sound and motion-detection alerts. £2.99 from www.snipca.com/16797

Forza Football

This free app (www.snipca.com/16799) shows live scores for your favourite team and from around the world.



copy one playlist of tracks to the Watch itself, then listen to it on Bluetooth headphones. To connect these, you open the Music app and use Force Touch. This is a bit like right-clicking on a PC: press the display and an options screen pops up.

Health apps & battery life

Health and fitness apps are crucial to the Apple Watch's appeal. The Activity app reminds you to stand up and move around, then charts your progress. The Workout app covers more intensive exercise such as running and cycling. Your heart rate is measured periodically by the pulse monitor, or whenever you use the Heart Rate Glance, and then displayed on a graph in the iPhone's Health app.

The pulse monitor also detects when you're wearing the Watch, so it only asks for your passcode each time you put it on. You can then send a short recording of your heartbeat (or a recorded message or a little drawing) to another Watch owner with Digital Touch, accessed via your favourite contacts or 'Friends', which are displayed by pressing the



button below the Digital Crown. If you find the Watch's controls hard to access or you want to put it on your other wrist, you can wear it the opposite way round. Simply tweak the settings in the Apple Watch app to turn the display the correct way up.

Supplied with a clever folding 3-pin plug, the charging cable clamps magnetically to the back of the Watch. In continuous use, the battery would run out quickly, but we found it always lasted a full day because we only looked at the Watch for a few seconds at a time. This is because, for example, you can't

see much more than the subject of emails, so you'll always revert to your iPhone to read them. To text anything except a preset reply you must dictate it out loud.

Conclusion

While some advanced features, such as creating Calendar events, can be handled by saying 'Hey Siri' (or holding the digital crown) and telling the Watch what you want to do, the Apple Watch is best for passively receiving information. This can be useful, especially if you're often busy with things that make it awkward to get out your iPhone. But it's an accessory rather than an essential device, and an expensive one at that.

SPECIFICATIONS

Retina AMOLED touchscreen • 38.6x33.3x10.5 or 42x35.9x10.5mm (HxWxD) • Fits 135-210mm wrist size • One-year warranty • Requires iPhone 5, 5c, 5s, 6 or 6 Plus www.snipca.com/16795

HOW WE TEST

Computeractive is owned by Dennis Publishing, which owns a hi-tech facility for testing the latest technology. You'll often read references to our benchmark testing, which is a method of assessing products using the same criteria. For example, we test the speed of every PC and the battery life of every tablet in exactly the same way. This makes our reviews authoritative, rigorous and accurate.

Dennis Publishing also owns the magazines *PC Pro*, *Computer Shopper*, *Web User* and *Micro Mart* and the website Expert Reviews (www.expertreviews.co.uk). This means we can test thousands of products before choosing the most relevant for Computeractive.

FAIR AND IMPARTIAL

Our writers follow strict guidelines to ensure the reviews are fair and impartial. The manufacturer has no involvement in our tests.

OUR AWARDS



We award every product that gets five stars our Buy It! stamp of approval. It means we were

extremely impressed by the product, and we think you will be too.



Every product that gets a four-star review is given the Great Pick award. We highly recommend these products, although they just fail to meet the high standard of our Buy It! winners.

PRICES

Our reviews contain a link to the best price we found online at the time of press.

VERDICT: It's our pick of the smart watches so far, but you may still feel you don't really need it



ALTERNATIVES: Pebble Steel £150 A cheaper, simpler watch for both iPhone and Android users. If you prefer a round watch, consider the £210 LG G Watch R



Reviews

PC | £600 from www.snipca.com/16709

Palicomp Intel i5 Elite

It may not have the looks, but this desktop PC shows a lot of brains

Laptops may be more popular, but a tower system is still the way to get the most capable PC for your money, and with room to upgrade parts later. The Palicomp Intel i5 Elite has an excellent specification for just £600.

In fact, it's surprising just how much you can get for this amount of money when the manufacturer has spent it wisely. This PC is based on Intel's Core i5-4690K CPU chip, which you might expect to find in a computer costing well over £1,000. And Palicomp has made the most of it by **overclocking** it from 3.5GHz to 4.6GHz. This shouldn't have any ill effect except using a little more power and generating more heat, which would be a problem in a laptop, but not in this spacious desktop case.

“For £600 it would be hard to find a PC that performs better than this**”**

The case is Cooler Master's Elite 430. It looks rather functional, with its thin metal panels and basic styling, but will probably live under your desk anyway, so you won't have to look at it every day. A large slow-spinning fan at the front helps to keep temperatures safely low without

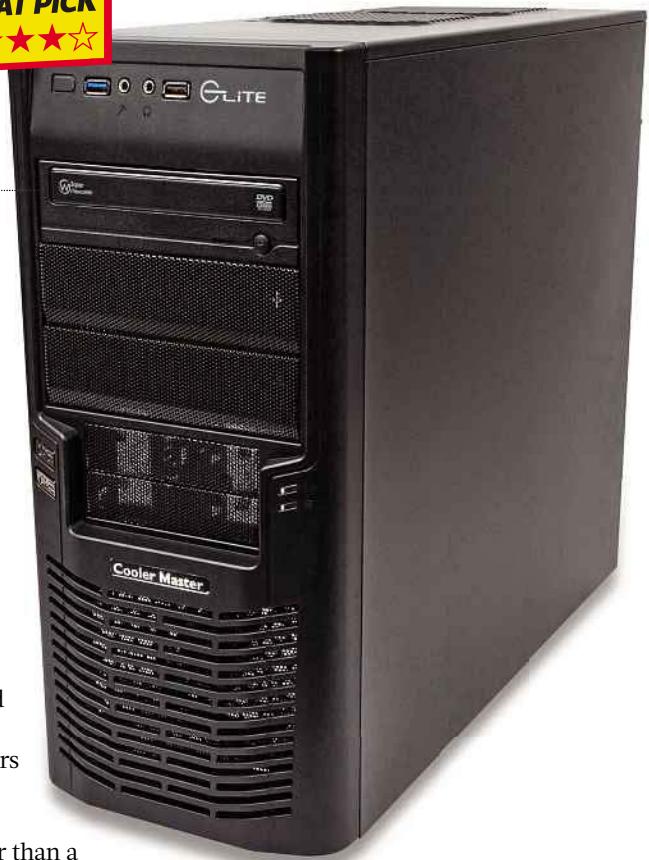
making a lot of noise, even when the CPU and **GPU** are working at their hardest, as our tests confirmed. We would have liked to see filters to stop dust getting in, but they're not essential.

Although the little Nvidia GeForce GTX 750 graphics card is a budget component, costing under £100 on its own, it punches above its weight. Again, the version Palicomp uses has been overclocked, and it'll cope with more ambitious 3D and video tasks better than the integrated graphics processors typically found in laptops.

Storage is in the form of a mechanical hard drive rather than a faster **SSD**, but it's a hybrid drive, with a small SSD built in to speed things up. The result of all these wise choices is that the Intel i5 Elite really flies along in use, beating comparable systems in our tests. It's even pretty good for games: as long as you don't go higher than Full HD resolution (similar to the latest games consoles), you'll be able to play current titles with reasonable detail, and older ones at their highest quality.

Palicomp offers a wide range of upgrades that can be applied when you order. The benefit of a desktop case is that you can also add and replace components

yourself. If that's of interest, you have two free **PCI slots**, two **PCI Express x1 slots** and one **PCI Express 2 x16** (limited to x2 speeds). There are four 3.5in and two 2.5in drive bays, but with only two **SATA 600** ports free, you're limited to adding two drives. A 10GB/sec M.2 slot lets you add a full-speed SSD. Up to four extra 120mm fans could be added to cool your new components. The 450 watt **PSU** could restrict your choice of a new graphics card – 600W would have been more flexible – and



overall this isn't the most expandable desktop PC.

Building a system for a modest price is all about compromise, though, and for £600 it would be hard to find one that performs better than this. Add a monitor, keyboard and mouse, and you'll have a great PC ready for both everyday and more ambitious tasks.

SPECIFICATIONS

3.5GHz Intel Core i5 4960K quad-core processor • Overclocked to 4.6GHz • 8GB memory • 1TB hybrid hard drive • Nvidia GTX750 graphics card with 2GB memory • 24x DVD+/-RW drive • Windows 8.1 64-bit • 424x190x490mm (HxWxD) • Three-year warranty www.snipca.com/16709

VERDICT: A clever choice of parts make this PC excellent value



ALTERNATIVE: Chillblast Fusion Quasar £630

This system offers more expansion potential, although the Palicomp Elite performs better in our tests



PRINTER £112 from www.snipca.com/16909

Brother DCP-J4120DW

An A4 printer that prints A3

This is a good idea from Brother: an A4-size colour multi-function printer that can take A3 sheets, twice the size, when you need bigger prints.

It saves paying for a full A3 model and finding the extra desk space.



The trick is that the print carriage matches the long side of A4 rather than the short side. Ordinary-sized paper goes into the front tray sideways, which takes a bit of getting used to. When you want to use A3, you feed it in from the back by hand, one sheet at a time. This means holding the paper up to the slot until the printer grabs it, supporting it by hand as it's pulled into the printer, waiting for it to finish, then pressing a button to say you're ready to collect it from the front. The output tray is too small for big paper, so if the printer ejected it automatically it would fall on the floor.

Printing a multi-page A3 document – for example, an A4 brochure to fold in half and staple – is far too much fuss to be practical more than once in a blue moon. If you just need to print an occasional poster, though, it does work, and even A3 can be printed right to the edge.

Photo enlargements would be another use of A3, but Brother isn't the best photo printer, delivering slightly washed-out colour. It's fine for text and business graphics, although text could be blacker. Scans came in a bit under-saturated, too, with muddy shadows. Both printing and scanning were fast, at 15.2 text pages per minute (ppm) in our tests, or 19ppm in draft quality, and 13 seconds for a 150dpi A4 scan.

Although we've seen it sold for less, the J4120 isn't particularly cheap at current dealer prices. That does include a 2.7in colour touchscreen, Wi-Fi, a memory card slot (for photo printing only) and duplex (double-sided)

output, and at 4.1p per colour page, using XL cartridges, its running costs are very reasonable. With A3 as a bonus, it's not a bad deal.

SPECIFICATIONS

6,000x1,200dpi maximum print resolution • 27ppm colour and 35ppm mono quoted speeds • 2,400x1,200dpi maximum scan resolution • USB • 802.11n Wi-Fi • 29x48x16.3cm (HxWxD) • 8kg • One-year warranty www.snipca.com/16911

VERDICT: We like the principle, but printing on A3 is very fiddly and having to load normal paper the wrong way round isn't ideal. Worth considering only if you definitely need a compact printer with emergency A3



ALTERNATIVE: HP Officejet Pro 8610 £109

This A4 MFP has a different special feature: a document feeder for scanning multiple pages



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Reviews

SMARTPEN | £135 from www.snipca.com/16694

Livescribe Smartpen 3

Use a real pen and paper to make digital notes

Livescribe's ballpoint pen uses miniature camera technology and special 'dot paper' to make a digital record of your handwritten notes while you scribble. Thanks to updated **firmware** and a new app, this model now works with Android as well as iOS phones and tablets.

The Smartpen 3 looks and feels like a proper, rather classy pen. Twisting a central metal ring extends the retractable tip and turns the pen on, so it's ready to use. At the top, there's a pocket clip and a large rubber stylus tip that you can use instead of a finger on your touchscreen. If you have your mobile device with you, everything you write is sent to it immediately; otherwise, the pen saves your notes to its internal storage for later.

Because the pen writes in real ink, the supplied dot paper notebook, which is essential to the process, will get used up. Replacements, in a variety of styles, start at around £14. On each page you'll find printed 'buttons' for record, pause and stop, which you can tap to control audio recording, and icons that add new digital pages to different categories: flagged, tagged and favourites.

The audio recorder function, which



The Feed view shows your notes as individual snippets

only works if you have the app running on your device, lets you make synchronised recordings, or 'Pencasts', that include both sound and handwritten notes. When you take notes during a speech or lecture, they're associated with the relevant moment in the audio.

To use the Smartpen 3 with your iOS or Android device, you need to download the free Livescribe+ and Livescribe Link apps. The first time you open Livescribe+, it prompts you to enable Bluetooth and turn on your pen for pairing, then guides you through updating the pen's firmware. This only needs doing once.

The Livescribe+ app is split into Page and Feed views. Page shows each page of your notebook in full, so you can flick through your notes. Feed shows your notes as individual 'snippets', in the order you made them. An obvious next step is to convert your notes into editable text. To do this, you flip a snippet sideways, and the app runs handwriting recognition on it.

As you might expect, the results are patchy: good on clear printed or cursive text, but poor on lists, diagrams and scrawled block capitals. You can fix mistakes manually, and to help with this, if a note or a page has an associated audio recording, the Pencasts tab appears, letting you play back from the relevant point.

From the app, you can share snippets, whole pages or Pencasts via email, social media or other linked apps. Snippets are sent as JPG images, pages as PDFs, and audio Pencasts in a special Livescribe PDF format: this can be read as a normal PDF.

SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS

iPhone 4s • iPod 5th generation • iPad 3 • iPad mini or later running iOS 8, or Android phone or tablet running KitKat 4.4.2 or later www.snipca.com/16695



in Adobe Reader, but if it's opened using the Livescribe PDF web or mobile apps, you can play the audio track too. Notes that have been through text recognition are sent as plain text.

Disappointingly, it doesn't automatically back up your notes to the web. You can export everything to Google Drive, Dropbox or other cloud-storage services, but you have to do this manually. If you're using an iPhone or iPad, you can back up your Livescribe+ content using iCloud, but there's no universal equivalent for Android. The more expensive Wifi Smartpen adds support for Evernote (see below), a cloud service for both Android and iOS.

The Livescribe Smartpen 3 isn't cheap, and you'll need a recent Android or iOS device to use it with. It's a shame text recognition isn't quite magical enough to convert all your handwriting accurately. But writing on real paper is much more practical than trying to write on a touchscreen, even with a stylus, and making simultaneous paper, audio and digital notes is a great way to work.

VERDICT: Nothing beats handwriting for fast and flexible notes, but making them digital isn't quite foolproof yet



ALTERNATIVE: Livescribe Wifi Smartpen 2GB £160 This pricier model adds internal audio recording and Evernote cloud storage to keep your notes safe



LAPTOP £170 from www.snipca.com/16809

Lenovo B50-30

A full-size Windows laptop for well under £200

It's a long time now since Lenovo took over IBM's laptop division, but there's still something of the business computer about this budget system. It's functional rather than elegant, but it ticks a lot of boxes.

Laptops at low prices are usually very small and/or have limited functionality (such as Chromebooks, which run everything within a web browser). The B50-30 has a large 15.6in screen and a full-size keyboard. And while 'under £200' often means £199.99, in this case you'll have £30 change.

Of course, that means compromise. The jet-black Lenovo is reasonably slim – exactly an inch, or 2.5cm – but at 2.3kg it's heavy. But sadly, that's not because it's built to last. The thin plastic lid flexes alarmingly if you twist it (don't!) and even the main part feels flimsy around the DVD drive. Still, you do get a DVD drive, something none of Apple's laptops offer at five times the price.

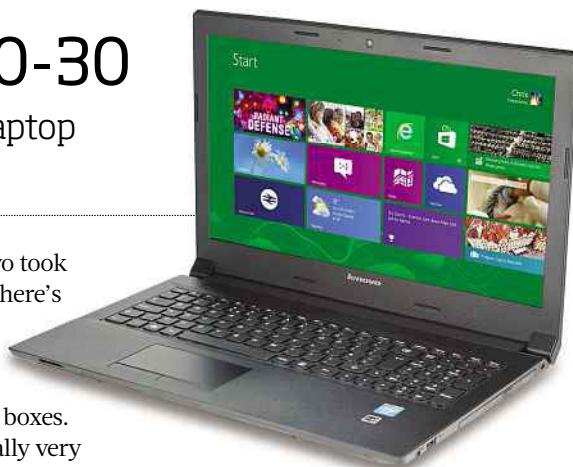
“The screen and keyboard are very disappointing”

You also get a hard drive, rather than an **SSD**. This is slower and noisier, clattering away whenever programs access it, but its 500GB capacity is bigger than most SSDs. You can plug whatever else you need into the three USB ports, one of which is **USB 3.0** for high speed. There's also a **Gigabit Ethernet** port for connecting to a network, and the latest **802.11n** Wi-Fi and Bluetooth 4. A webcam is built in.

Let's be honest, though, the main things that matter in a laptop are the screen and keyboard. And these are very

SPECIFICATIONS

Intel Celeron N2840 dual-core processor • 4GB memory • 500GB hard drive • DVD/RW drive • 15.6in 1366x768 anti-glare LED screen • Windows 8.1 • 24.7x380x262mm (HxWxD) • One-year warranty www.snipca.com/16817



disappointing. The keyboard is of the usual Scrabble-tile variety, but feels unusually floppy and unresponsive. At least the touchpad works smoothly.

When we test screens, we're looking at how much contrast they can show between the darkest blacks and brightest whites, and how wide a range of colours they can represent. In all of these respects the Lenovo was mediocre at best. Everything looks dull, dark colours blend together, and anything blue looks, well, not very blue. The **resolution** is the same as smaller screens, so everything is displayed bigger, which may be an advantage, but at the cost of extra detail. For photo editing or even watching films, that's a serious drawback.

For other purposes you might be able to live with these flaws, and the Celeron N2840 **processor** is decent enough to cope with everyday tasks. The battery only lasted four-and-a-half hours in our tests, but portability isn't the B50-30's strong point anyway, and it's still enough to pop out to a cafe for a break.

We can't give this PC a high rating, but that doesn't mean you should avoid it. If a small screen and tiny storage don't appeal, it may appeal to those on a limited budget.

VERDICT: Not portable computing at its best, but at least it's cheap, and you can use on the go when necessary



ALTERNATIVE: HP Stream 11 £180

A much lighter 11in laptop with the same display resolution and processor, but only 2GB of memory and 32GB of flash storage



The best... Chargers

Just Mobile Highway Max

£29.95 (£22)
from www.snipca.com/16891



This car charger is far better made than the plastic ones you get in supermarkets. Each of the two USB ports is rated at 2.1 amps, suitable for both phones and tablets. One coiled **microUSB** cord is included, which won't trail in your footwell.

Tizi Turbolader

£29.99 from www.snipca.com/16893



Another excellent charger for the car. This four-way cigarette lighter adapter handles a total of 9.6 amps, enough for all your mobile devices. And it's bright red. Car charging doesn't get better than this.

Mu Duo

£22 from www.snipca.com/16894



The Apple Watch comes with a clever folding mains adapter, which you can buy for £25 (www.snipca.com/16895). But this British invention did it first, costs £3 less, and can charge two devices, including tablets.

Anker 60W 6-port USB Charger

£26 from www.snipca.com/16896



Multi-charger plugs leave lots of cables trailing. This one sits on your desk, with one cable to the mains. Six ports can charge gadgets, phones and tablets up to a generous total of 12 amps.

TABLET | £500 from www.snipca.com/16881



Sony Xperia Z4 Tablet

Real competition for Apple's iPad Air 2?

Other manufacturers have struggled to compete with Apple's iPad, and it got even harder last autumn, when the iPad Air 2 arrived thinner, lighter and more powerful than ever. But Sony has come up with an Android tablet that's even lighter and just as slim.

Unlike the iPad, the Xperia Z4 Tablet is fairly waterproof, designed to withstand a metre of water for 30 minutes. That's reassuring for the holidays, or watching films in the bath. The microSD card slot needs an annoying flap to protect it, but the USB port manages without.

“The best alternative to the iPad at this size”

The screen is slightly bigger than the iPad's and has even more pixels per inch. Sony claims it can display a wider range of colours, too, but our tests dispute this. Even so, it's technically superior to everything except Samsung's Galaxy Super AMOLED, and we preferred the Xperia's colour balance. It's also brighter and has excellent contrast, though blacks could be a little deeper.

Every iPad so far has worked for 9 to 11 hours on one battery charge. A few rivals last longer, but Sony has pushed the boat out. When we set out to test the quoted 17 hours of video playback, the Z4 actually lasted just short of 20 hours. That would get you from New York to Singapore on the longest non-stop flight ever operated. Even if your plans aren't so exotic, you don't need to worry about staying near the mains.



The iPad Air 2 is still the fastest tablet you can buy – everything works quickly and smoothly, and games look better on it than on the latest consoles. The Xperia keeps up pretty well, however. Although we couldn't run all our usual speed tests on the early model we had, it just about matched the Google Nexus, even outscoring it in graphics processing. Opening apps and swiping around in Android 5.0 Lollipop felt quick.

Talking of consoles, if you do have a PlayStation 4, you can use the Xperia as a remote display. You can put a game in the PS4 and play it on the tablet screen anywhere in your home over your Wi-Fi network.

Sony has included a wireless keyboard, which business users who travel a lot will particularly find useful. The Z4 is still not a laptop: unlike Microsoft's Surface, it's limited to Android, not Windows, and the keyboard isn't quite full-size. There's a touchpad to control the cursor, but we found it jerky. The Xperia's 8.1-megapixel

rear camera is similar to the iPad Air 2's in specification, although as usual Apple wins the day when you look closely at the quality of your photos.

Your photos, videos, games and apps have about 20GB of space to fill in the 32GB of storage. The iPad offers only 16GB as standard, but that costs £100 less, while the 64GB iPad is £479 (albeit with no keyboard). But the Z4 can be expanded up to 128GB by

adding a microSD card. If you want a mobile SIM as well as Wi-Fi, the Xperia Z4 4G costs £80 extra.

You might have noticed we hardly have a bad word to say about the Xperia Z4 Tablet. Well, here's one: bendy. Apple makes its tablets out of aluminium for a reason. The Z4 is plastic, and although it has a nice matt finish, there's no hiding the fact that when you pick it up by opposite corners and twist, it twists. Despite its reinforced nylon corners, it feels quite vulnerable.

If you can live with that, the Sony Xperia Z4 Tablet is the best alternative to the iPad at this size. Although it's pricey, it's a Great Pick.

SPECIFICATIONS

10.1in 2,560x1,600 screen • 32GB flash storage
• 802.11ac Wi-Fi • 5.1-megapixel front camera •
8.1-megapixel rear camera • Android 5.0 Lollipop
• 254x167x6.1mm (HxWxD) • 389g • One-year
warranty www.snipca.com/16881

VERDICT: Apple still has the best mobile software and the sturdiest hardware, but this is a rival worth considering



ALTERNATIVE: Apple iPad Air 2 £479 Cheaper and stronger than the Xperia Z4 with twice the storage and better software, this is still our favourite





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Reviews

HOMEPLUGS | £80 from www.snipca.com/16866

Netgear PLP1200

Carry wireless broadband over your mains circuit

Powerline networking adapters (or HomePlugs) send your broadband connection around your home using your electrical wiring. They're a great solution to those blackspots where your router's Wi-Fi signal struggles to reach.

“It's a great solution for those Wi-Fi blackspots at home**”**

Plug one of the two Netgear units into a wall socket near your router and connect it to the router using one of the two **Ethernet** cables supplied. Plug the other one into a socket near to your PC, games console, or any other device with an Ethernet port and connect it using the second cable. If you need to connect a device wirelessly, such as your tablet or phone, you should consider the Devolo dLAN (see our review, Issue 450), which creates its own Wi-Fi network.

SPECIFICATIONS

Theoretical maximum speed of 1200Mbps • Gigabit Ethernet ports • Encrypted • 120x58x42mm (HxWxD) • Two-year warranty www.snipca.com/16885

There's no software or configuration to worry about. There are buttons on each plug to set up a secure connection or reset it. Three lights indicate power and the status of your connection, so you know at a glance if all is well. There's even a pass-through power socket on the front of each unit, so you won't lose use of the wall socket.

The 1200Mbps rating is lightning fast for powerline plugs, and we had no trouble streaming videos live in our tests. A pre-recorded hour-long video file transferred from one computer to another, between floors, in less than half a minute.

Home networking in this way is perfectly safe from an electrical standpoint, and more secure than Wi-Fi, because the signal doesn't pass through the air. It can't leak to your neighbours' plugs, even if they're running a similar system, for the same reason they can't use electricity off your meter.

Its limitation is that if you want to work somewhere that's on a separate electrical circuit, such as a shed or garden office,



you'll need to think of a different solution, such as a more powerful router.

The PLP1200 supports HomePlug standards, so you can extend the network by buying extra adapters from Netgear or other makers. Again, it's just a matter of plugging in and pressing a button.

VERDICT: This high-speed, inexpensive kit is a simple fix for Wi-Fi blackspots around your home



ALTERNATIVE: Devolo dLAN 500 AV Wireless+ £105 These HomePlugs provide Wi-Fi and three Ethernet ports but aren't as fast as the Netgear's PLP1200



WHAT SHOULD I BUY? We solve your buying dilemmas

Which tablet has the best display?

Q My 7in Android tablet has a poor display. Whenever the sun comes out I can hardly see a thing on it, even when I'm in the house. As well as reading books, I use it for playing films, so it needs to connect to my TV with a **mini HDMI** cable. Is there a tablet out there with a better screen?

Pauline Taylor



A A tablet display will be easier to read in sunlight if the screen is bright and not so reflective. Our favourite 7in tablet, Apple's iPad Mini 2, is slightly disappointing on both these counts. So if you want to stick with Android, the Google Nexus 7 has a much brighter screen, even on the older model (£139 for 16GB from www.snipca.com/16883). If you search for 'nexus 7 hdmi' on Amazon you'll find adapters to connect it to your TV for around £10.

Even brighter, but slightly bigger, is

Samsung's Galaxy Tab S 8.4 (£249 for 16GB from www.snipca.com/16884). You'll need the correct **MHL** adapter to go from the Tab S's **microUSB** port to a standard HDMI cable; Samsung's own costs £34 from Amazon.

The 8in Nvidia Shield (£239 for 16GB from www.pc specialist.co.uk/shield) is a good Android tablet with a very bright screen, and has mini HDMI built in.

Do you need advice on what you should buy? Email us at letters@computeractive.co.uk

MUSIC-EDITING SOFTWARE | £30 www.snipca.com/16687

Cakewalk Music Creator 7

Ambitious music production on a budget

Considering the number of people that play a musical instrument, it's surprising there isn't more music-production software aimed at home users. Then again, it's no easy matter creating software that combines recording, editing and mixing of live and MIDI performances, complete with effects and virtual instruments, for just £30.

Music Creator is made by the same company that make Sonar (a powerful recording application that costs £420), so it has plenty of technical expertise to draw on. Music Creator has many similarities, but it dispenses with most of Sonar's advanced features and comes with an interface that's geared more towards home users.

“It has impressive features, but feels a bit clumsy in parts**”**

We really like the software's interface, which strikes an excellent balance between keeping useful features close to hand without bombarding you with loads of cryptic controls. There are playback controls and a toolbar along the top – most edits can be performed using the Smart tool that automatically adapts to the particular task in hand. The panel on the left shows mixer settings for the selected track. MIDI and audio-editing options for the selected track appear at the bottom, while libraries of sounds, effects and instruments are on the right. It's not easy fitting an entire recording studio into a single computer screen, but this is one of the best efforts we've seen.

There's work to do before you can start recording, though. Music Creator uses the same sound card-configuration options as Sonar. They're great if you're an expert on audio driver types, latency settings and routing options, but a complete minefield for anyone else. The software is crying out for a tutorial to guide new users through the configuration process.



If you can overcome this hurdle then there are some great features waiting. Audio editing is fast and precise, with superb options for keeping multiple tracks in sync. A feature called Take Lanes makes it easy to record multiple takes and splice the best bits together – a massively useful feature that's normally reserved for much pricier software. MIDI editing is just as accomplished, with several ways of manipulating your MIDI recordings (grid, list and notation-based options).

There's a generous library of [audio loops](#), which can be played in the Media panel on the right and dragged directly into your project. However, the process used to stretch these loops to fit the track's tempo is crude and often results in garbled chattering noises. If you own a MIDI keyboard you'll be more interested in the high-quality virtual instruments – a drum kit, bass guitar, electric piano and string section. There's also a general-purpose synthesizer module, and you can add more using [plug-ins](#). There's a decent collection of bundled effects, too, including refreshingly simple reverb, distortion and compression effects with each controlled by a single knob.

SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS

Windows 7 or later • 2.6GHz multi-core processor or faster • Minimum 4GB memory • 5GB available hard-drive space www.snipca.com/16688

There are oversights, though. It's not clear how to record a mono audio input – stereo is the default, so connecting a mic means it records on the left channel only. Some advanced options, such as [bus channels](#), are available, which is great for experienced musicians but confusing for everyone else. Even something as simple as starting and stopping playback is a little clumsy. The spacebar acts as a shortcut, but the playback position returns to where it started when you press stop, which is counter-intuitive.

Music Creator has lots of impressive features, all the more so given its low price, but there are quite a few areas where it feels unnecessarily complex or just a bit clumsy. Even so, it's a great program if you're a budding musician and willing to devote enough time to learn how to use it.

VERDICT: Lots of sophisticated features, but the learning curve is a little too steep for home-oriented software



ALTERNATIVE:

Steinberg Sequel

3 £59 It's twice the price, but Steinberg is easy to use and powerful



CAMERA | £390 from www.snipca.com/16685

Panasonic Lumix DMC-GF7

Panasonic loses its way with its latest camera

The Panasonic Lumix GF6 was one of our favourite cameras of 2013 (see our review, Issue 405), and nothing came along to displace it in 2014. This compact system camera (CSC) had a large sensor and a wide selection interchangeable lenses delivering DSLR levels of image quality and versatility. It was just as fast as a DSLR, had lots of features and, thanks to its straightforward controls and superb touchscreen interface, felt instantly familiar to anyone upgrading from a point-and-shoot compact camera. Best of all, it was one of the smallest and lightest CSCs around, and one of the cheapest too.

There's always room for improvement, though, and Panasonic hopes to do just that with the GF7. Its appearance is quite a departure, with the GF6's modern curves replaced by a more retro, angular casing. Beauty is obviously very subjective, but we're not taken with Panasonic's attempt at retro chic.

“It's petite, with excellent photo and video quality **”**

Impressively, the GF7 is even smaller than the GF6. The camera body has slimmed down by 5mm in width and depth, and shed 57g in the process. The bundled 3x zoom lens is 40g lighter, too, and can retract in on itself for transit, giving a combined depth of 62mm. It's not quite pocket sized, but it's extremely unobtrusive for a CSC with a big sensor and a 3x zoom lens.

The main casualty of this weight loss is the battery, which only lasts for 230 shots. We found this wasn't quite enough for a day's sightseeing, and additional batteries cost a whopping £45. The brightness of the flash has also decreased and is only

SPECIFICATIONS

16-megapixel sensor • 2.7x zoom (24–64mm) • 3in hinged touchscreen • Accepts SD, SDHC and SDXC storage cards • 341g • 65x114x62mm (HxWxD) • One-year warranty www.snipca.com/16686



properly effective at very close quarters.

We're happy to report that the controls are virtually unchanged. There's a dedicated mode dial to access auto and manual **exposure**, a panorama mode, and modes tailored for different shooting conditions and ones designed to give your images a little artistic flair. Fully automatic mode is via a dedicated button.

There's also a dedicated button you can set as a shortcut to any feature you like (its default is to launch the Wi-Fi functions). You can wirelessly transfer photos to smartphones, tablets, PCs and even straight to social-network sites. You can use smartphones and tablets as remote controls, showing you the camera's view and letting you control the settings.

Various other buttons cover functions such as **EV compensation** and **white balance**, and there's a wheel for quickly adjusting your chosen setting. The touchscreen gives quick access to all the other key settings, and also makes it easy to define which part of the scene to focus on. The screen is hinged at the top and can flip right over if you want to take some selfies. Unlike the GF6's screen however, it can't tilt down to provide an even wider range of shooting angles.

Lumix G-series cameras have always excelled at video quality and this one is no exception, with pin-sharp details, life-like colours and very responsive autofocus. However, it's disappointing that manual-exposure control is no longer available for video capture. It's a

superb point-and-shoot video camera, but not so good if you want to get creative.

Photo speed and quality have been beefed up though. Both the GF6 and GF7 are extremely fast in normal use, but the GF7 is a little quicker in continuous mode, rattling along at 5.4 frames per second (fps) compared to the GF6's 4.2fps. Photos taken in low light on the GF7 have less **noise**, although rival Sony CSCs produce even better results in low light thanks to their larger sensors. The GF7 was hard to fault in bright conditions, with crystal-clear details and faithful colours, thanks to the expertly judged automatic settings.

We love the GF7's petite dimensions, while photo and video quality are both excellent. However, we are disappointed that certain features have regressed since the GF6. Plus, with some superb CSCs from rival manufacturers available for well under £300, the GF7 is a little overpriced.

VERDICT: Great image quality, but too much has been sacrificed for style and size while the price is a little high



ALTERNATIVE: Sony Alpha A5000

£251 The choice of lens for this CSC isn't as broad as it is for the GF7, but its appeal lies in its superb image quality and low price



E-READER | £110 from www.snipca.com/16858

Kobo Glo HD

The best e-reader you can buy at this price

Back when Amazon was primarily a bookstore, it decided to sell electronic readers as well as the books to read on them. Its Kindle devices have remained the most popular, offering a paper-like matt display. But they have a number of competitors, and this could be the strongest yet for the Kindle Paperwhite.

Both have a six-inch black-and-white touchscreen, but the Glo HD has about 50-per-cent more pixels. This makes text incredibly clear, even if you set the font size very small. You also get a much wider choice of fonts and sizes than on the Kindle, and what's more you can set how bold and sharp you want the text. In fact, this even beats Amazon's Voyage model.

“The strongest rival yet to Amazon's Kindle Paperwhite**”**

Unlike the Voyage, the Kobo lacks buttons, so you can only turn the page by swiping across the screen. Because you can't turn off the title and chapter sections at the top and bottom, you see less of your page than on the Paperwhite.

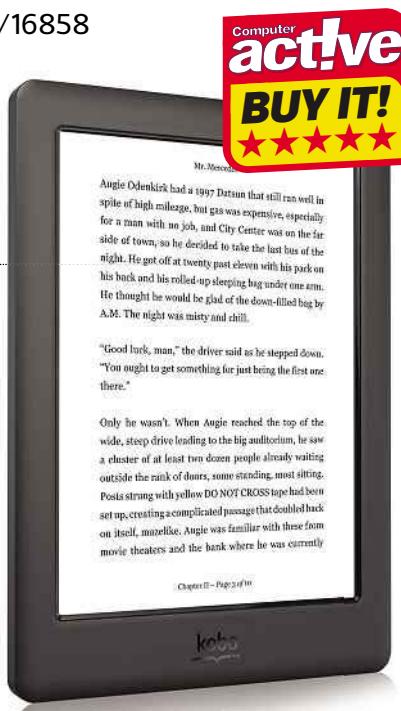
The adjustable 'frontlight', which spreads light evenly across the page, means you can read in any conditions. The case is less bulky than the Kindle Paperwhite's, and the rubbery back makes it easy to hold, although it does tend to collect dust. The Glo HD is also 26g lighter.

Both Amazon and Kobo quote battery life as two months (reading for half an hour a day). If you're a keen and quick reader you'll need to recharge the device far more often, but it's just a matter of plugging it in.

With 4GB of storage, twice that of the Kindle Paperwhite, the Kobo can hold

SPECIFICATIONS

6in E Ink touchscreen • 4GB memory • 802.11n Wi-Fi • Reads EPUB, EPUB3, PDF, MOBI, CBZ, CBR, TXT, RTF, HTML, JPEG, GIF, BMP, TIF formats • 157x115x9.2mm (HxWxD) • One-year warranty www.snipca.com/16908



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Kobo's own store (www.snipca.com/16855) has millions of titles for sale from 49p. The price for any given book is often a little higher than Amazon's, but unlike with the Kindle, which is tied to Amazon, you can shop around for EPUBs from independent online bookstores.

It can't be a coincidence that since the Glo HD came out, Amazon has reduced the Paperwhite by £10 to £99. But, unless you already have a library of Kindle ebooks, the Kobo is the better buy.

VERDICT: Better than the Kindle equivalent, and you're not tied to Amazon for your ebook-buying



ALTERNATIVE: Amazon Kindle Paperwhite £99 The only reason to choose this model over the Kobo is if you already have a lot of books in Amazon's Kindle format



COMING SOON

SUMMER 2015

Apple's new music subscription service, Apple Music, arrives on 30 June. UK pricing hasn't yet been confirmed, but in the US it's \$9.99 per month, about £7.99.



SUMMER 2015

Apple Pay, which lets you pay at tills or online using an iPhone 6/6 Plus, iPad Air 2, iPad Mini 3 or Apple Watch, will be available in the UK from some time in July. But in shops it'll be limited to

£20, and Barclays customers won't be able to use it until a later date.



AUTUMN 2015

The second generation of Asus' ZenWatch has started to resemble the Apple

Watch a little more, although even the smaller of its two sizes is bigger than Apple's largest.

WINTER 2015

A leaked patent shows a Samsung design for an Android phone that turns into a Windows laptop when plugged into a keyboard and screen dock. If Samsung presses ahead with this hybrid, expect to see a release before Christmas.



NEXT ISSUE

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8 July



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Cheaper than a MacBook Air



Acer B326HUL
A bigger screen that's still affordable

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Our pick of products that have won the Buy It award

LAPTOP

Asus X555LA-XX290H

£300 from www.snipca.com/16158

Tested: Issue 446



Asus has made all the right choices with this budget Windows 8.1 laptop. Its comfortable keyboard, fast performance, respectably lengthy battery life and bright screen are all the more impressive given its low price.

ALTERNATIVE: Asus Chromebook C200

A cheap Chrome OS ultra-portable laptop with a bright screen, lengthy battery life and a great keyboard.

£199 from www.snipca.com/16705

DESKTOP PC

Palicomp AMD Kaveri Evolution

£500 from www.snipca.com/16354

Tested: Issue 422



A budget PC with a fast overclocked processor. It also has good upgrade potential and comes with a surprisingly good 24in monitor, as well as a quality USB keyboard and mouse.

ALTERNATIVE: Chillblast Fusion Rhino

A very powerful and compact PC sold without a keyboard, mouse or monitor.

£929 from www.snipca.com/15252

TABLET

Apple iPad Mini 2

£239 from www.snipca.com/14467

Tested: Issue 416



Apple's mini tablet from 2013 is now available at an even lower price. The only thing it lacks compared with the Mini 3 is a fingerprint sensor and the option of lots of built-in storage. Otherwise, it's an absolute bargain.

ALTERNATIVE: Apple iPad Air 2

A thin and lightweight 10in tablet with a fingerprint reader, an excellent screen and peerless selection of apps. £399 from www.snipca.com/16717

PHONE

Motorola Moto G 4G

(second generation)

£150 (without contract) from

www.snipca.com/16160

Tested: Issue 436



Moto G 4G has been updated with a 5in screen, 4G and a microSD card slot. The 3G version has dual SIM slots.

ALTERNATIVE: Apple iPhone 5s

An excellent smartphone with a great camera and performance. £459 without a contract from www.snipca.com/10171

DIGITAL CAMERA

Panasonic Lumix DMC-GF6

£219 from www.snipca.com/16355

Tested: Issue 405



This compact, interchangeable-lens camera is small and reasonably priced, yet it has well-designed controls, a wide range of available lenses and shoots excellent quality photos. The GF6 really is unbeatable value.

ALTERNATIVE: Sony A5000

A rival CSC with better low-light performance, although its controls and range of available lenses aren't quite as good. £251 from www.snipca.com/15854

E-READER

Kobo Aura H2O

£140 from www.snipca.com/15490

Tested: Issue 435



A waterproof e-reader with an easy-to-read, high-resolution touchscreen that's easy on the eyes and great for reading in the bath. There's no 3G version, but, unlike the Amazon Kindle, you can buy ebooks from independent retailers that use the ePub format.

ALTERNATIVE: Amazon Kindle Voyage

The best Kindle yet, with a sharp, extremely responsive touchscreen and easy-grip design. £169 from www.snipca.com/14451

SECURITY SOFTWARE

Kaspersky Internet Security 2015

£17.99 from www.snipca.com/14212

Tested: Issue 437



Kaspersky Internet Security 2015 has won our past four antivirus tests – an unprecedented set of results. The 2015 edition is available at an exclusive reader discount on our Software Store. Go to the link above for a one-device licence, or buy a three-device licence for just £39.99 at www.snipca.com/14221

ALTERNATIVE: Avast Free Antivirus

Almost as good as Kaspersky, but sometimes blocked legitimate software. Free from www.snipca.com/16493

PHOTO EDITING

Adobe Photoshop Lightroom 5

£110 from www.snipca.com/16356

Tested: Issue 402



Lightroom is a consistently elegant, powerful and fast photo-management program packed with sophisticated features. If you want to keep on top of your photos and make them look great, there's no better software to do it with.

ALTERNATIVE: Adobe Photoshop

Elements 13 A fast and polished photo-editing program with excellent advanced editing tools. £64 from www.snipca.com/16357

PC MONITOR

Dell UltraSharp U2412M

£205 from www.snipca.com/15271

Tested: Issue 378



An exquisite monitor with superb image quality, an adjustable stand, a high resolution and even a built-in USB hub. It costs a little more than other monitors, but it's money well spent. It's easily the best value monitor we've seen and is the one by which all others are judged.

ALTERNATIVE: AOC i2360PHU

A good quality budget 23in monitor that's easily adjustable and has a built-in USB 2.0 hub too. £140 from www.snipca.com/16706

HOMEPLUGS

Devolo dLAN 1200 Triple+ Starter Kit

£119 from www.snipca.com/15369

Tested: Issue 444



Devolo's latest HomePlug adapters are the fastest we've ever seen. They're also well designed too, with a passthrough socket so you can still power another device and the design should avoid skirting boards and other obstacles.

ALTERNATIVE: Devolo dLAN 650 Triple+ Starter Kit These HomePlug adapters have a sensible, space-saving design as well as three Gigabit Ethernet ports for connecting devices to your network. £75 from www.snipca.com/16019

ROUTER

Trendnet TEW-812DRU

£96 from www.snipca.com/15855

Tested: Issue 427

PRICE DROP



An incredibly fast 802.11ac router that's also one of the cheapest we've seen. It's superb and it's the router to buy if you're ready to make the jump to 802.11ac.

ALTERNATIVE: Linksys WRT1900AC

More expensive, but even faster and with loads of features too. £200 from www.snipca.com/14950

NAS

Synology DiskStation DS215j

£140 from www.snipca.com/16187

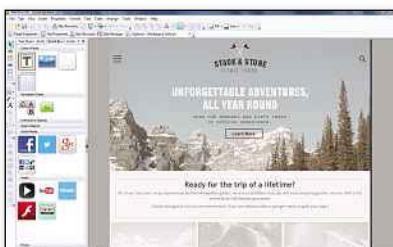
Tested: Issue 449



This two-drive **NAS** enclosure has it all – fast performance, easy configuration and plenty of extra features. Its only flaw is that installation is a little fiddly – but if you want quality network storage, then this is the obvious choice.

ALTERNATIVE: Synology DS414j

A four-drive NAS that's generally fast, easy to set up and use. £260 from www.snipca.com/16707

WEB DESIGN**Serif WebPlus X8**£90 from www.snipca.com/15278**Tested:** Issue 443

WebPlus X8 is one of the best programs available for designing a website without having to write a line of code. It comes with lots of templates, with more available for purchase if you need them. It also has lots of specialist tools for building a small business website.

ALTERNATIVE: **JimdoPro** This browser-based program for creating websites is slick and feature packed, but lacking in high-quality templates. £60 a year from www.jimdo.com/pricing

SMART TV**Samsung UE40H5500**£399 from www.snipca.com/16544**Tested:** Issue 446

A 40in smart TV with great picture quality and apps for all the terrestrial TV catch-up services. It has plenty of extras too, such as recording to USB storage, playing media files stored on a NAS or USB stick and plenty of HDMI ports.

ALTERNATIVE: **Sony KDL-42W705B**

Excellent image quality, stylish looks and a 42in screen. £400 from www.snipca.com/16496

COMPETITION

Win 1 of 2

Asus VivoMini UN42 mini PCs

Powered by 4th-generation Intel processors, the Asus VivoMini UN42 PC won our five-star Buy It! award in Issue 451. It's one of the best mini PCs we've ever tested. It's affordable, very quiet (no noisy fan) and surprisingly easy to upgrade for such a small PC. To enter, email your address to cacomp@dennis.co.uk by midnight 7 July.



The Asus VivoMini UN42 is available to buy now for £199.99 from PC World (www.snipca.com/16877). For more information visit www.asus.com/uk and follow Asus on Twitter (@ASUSUK).

MULTIFUNCTION PRINTER**Canon Pixma MG4250**£50 from www.snipca.com/12457**Tested:** Issue 382

This budget multifunction printer (MFP) isn't the fastest available, but it's cheap to buy and inexpensive to run. Just as importantly, both prints and scans look great. Unless you need faster print speeds or separate ink tanks for each colour, this MFP is the one to buy.

ALTERNATIVE: **Epson Expression Photo XP-760** A MFP aimed at photographers with an excellent scanner and peerless photo print quality. £114 from www.snipca.com/16497

SOLID-STATE DRIVE**Crucial BX100 1TB**£280 from www.snipca.com/16017**Tested:** Issue 445

A blindingly fast, high-capacity SSD at a lower price than ever before. If you've been put off buying a SSD because of the cost, then now is finally the time to take the plunge.

ALTERNATIVE: **Samsung 850 Pro**

256GB An even faster SSD, but it is much more expensive per gigabyte. £111 from www.snipca.com/16498

SECURITY CAMERA**Y-cam HomeMonitor HD**£100 from www.snipca.com/11646**Tested:** Issue 420

A home-security camera that's well priced and easy to set up. Plus, it has great picture quality, useful apps and there's no need to subscribe to any extra services. It's a worthy successor to the original HomeMonitor, our previous favourite security camera.

ALTERNATIVE: **D-Link Wireless N Day & Night Camera** A good-value security camera with excellent night vision. £74 from www.snipca.com/15275

PRICE
DROP



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THE DEFINITIVE GUIDE TO FREE SOFTWARE

Free software always sets off alarm bells. Will it be as good as paid-for packages? Will it try to sneak junk on to your PC? Will it constantly nag you to update to a premium version? In our new 148-page book *The Definitive Guide to Free Software*, we recommend only the very best free programs that deliver high-quality features and no nasty surprises (no junk – guaranteed!). It's packed with step-by-step tutorials and how-to guides for safe downloads – plus you'll learn which free antivirus you should use. In short, it contains every free program you'll ever need.

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RASPBERRY PI FOR KIDS

The Raspberry Pi is the incredible £20 British computer that's taking the world by storm. It's ideal for children of all ages to experiment, play games and learn valuable skills. We've updated this 148-page book for 2015 to include instructions on mastering the new Pi models (A+ and B+).



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THE DEFINITIVE GUIDE TO GOOGLE HIDDEN TOOLS

In the 164-page *The Definitive Guide to Google Hidden Tools*, we lift the lid on Google's most popular tools with more than 430 ways to make them more efficient, useful and tailored to your needs. These include clever add-ons for Chrome, amazing free apps for Android and stunning sights in Google Maps.



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Workshops & Tips

ULL OUT
& KEEP
Issue 452

14 pages of easy-to-follow workshops and expert tips

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42 Print every file in a folder instantly

PLUS

43 Readers' Tips
44 Phone & Tablet Tips
46 Make Windows Better

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48 Secret Tips For... Google Earth Pro

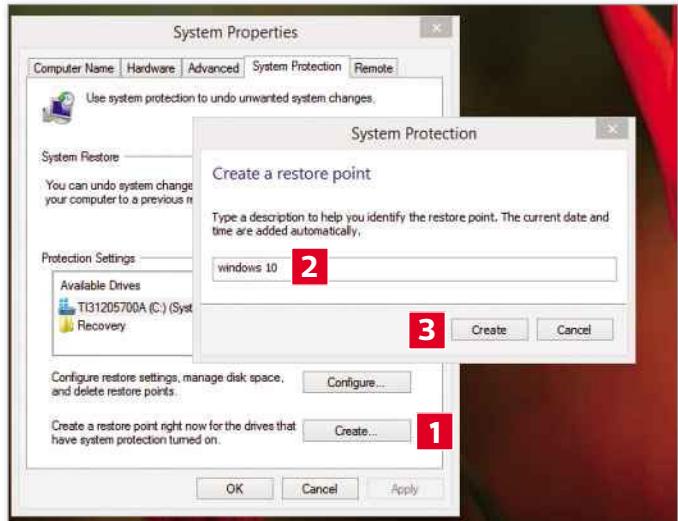
Try Windows 10's tools without installing it

What you need: Windows 10 UX Pack 3.0; Windows 7, 8 or 8.1

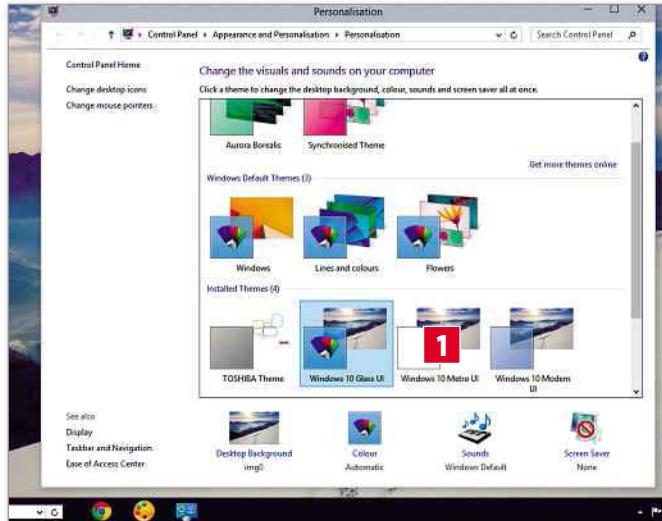
Time required: 45 minutes

In our lead Workshops in Issues 443 and 444, we showed you how to safely install and use the Windows 10 Technical Preview. If you aren't able to install it for any reason or don't want to, but still want a taste of how Windows 10 will look and feel, then you should

install the free Windows 10 UX Pack. The latest version of this unofficial but completely safe program includes a new search bar, customisable Start menu and virtual Desktops – three elements that will be integral to Microsoft's new operating system (out 29 July).



STEP 1 Windows 10 UX Pack will not change any of your PC's settings or modify any of your files, but it's still a good idea to create a **system restore point** and back up your important files. To create a restore point, press the Windows key, type **system restore**, then click 'Create a restore point'. Now click the Create button **1**, name your restore point **2**, then click Create **3**. You'll see a notification when that's done. Now back up your important files to a USB device or a cloud-storage service, such as OneDrive, Google Drive or Dropbox.

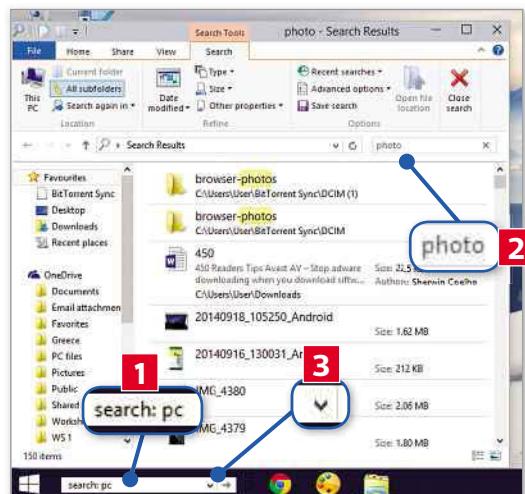


STEP 2 Before downloading Windows 10 UX Pack, you should first download and install Reason Core Security (www.snipca.com/16566). This will automatically block bundled extras during installation. Now go to www.snipca.com/16803 and click the Windows Download button at the top. Open the downloaded zipped file, double-click the Windows 10 UX Pack 3.0 setup file, click Run, Yes, then Install. Your screen may switch off and on a few times while the changes take place. Click Agree in the window that appears. After installation, select one of three Windows 10 themes **1**, then close the Personalisation window.

Workshops



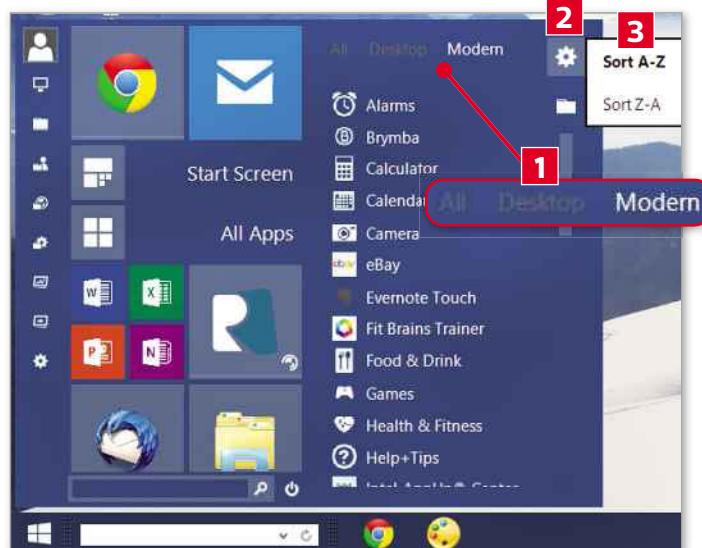
STEP 3 The first change you'll notice is an opaque Taskbar **1** (unlike earlier Windows versions, which are translucent) and the addition of a search bar to the right of the Start button. Both these features are present in Windows 10. However, unlike the Windows 10 search bar (which lets you search for anything on your PC and incorporates Microsoft's voice assistant Cortana), this search bar is actually the Windows Address Toolbar. Type a website address into the search field **2**, then press Enter to open it in your default browser.



STEP 4 To search for something on your PC, type **search: pc** into the address toolbar **1** and press Enter. Now type your search term (it will appear in top-right search bar of the Search Tools window **2**). You'll see all the relevant search results listed below. Click the address toolbar dropdown menu **3** to see a list of your previous searches (which you can click to repeat that search). If you want to remove the search bar, then right-click the Taskbar, click Properties, the Toolbars tab, untick Address, click Apply, then OK.

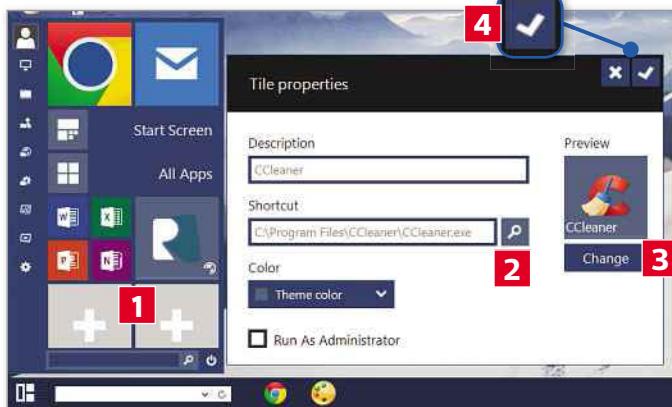


STEP 5 If you don't see the new Start button icon **1**, then restart your PC and wait for a few minutes. Click the button to see a Windows 10-style Start menu. The section on the left consists of smaller icons that let you access areas such as your Computer, Control Panel and Taskbar. The middle section features tiles for programs you frequently use (such as browsers, email and Office software). If you're using a Windows 8 PC, click 'Start screen' **2** to go to the Modern tile interface. Now move your cursor to the right to bring up the third section (see Step 6) **3**.



STEP 6 As with Windows 10, you can customise the Windows 10 UX Pack's Start menu tiles (middle section). The easiest way is to move your cursor to the third section on the right, then click either the All, Desktop or Modern tabs **1** to filter your programs accordingly. You can sort them alphabetically (or reverse alphabetically) by clicking the cog icon **2**, then choosing the relevant option **3**. Next, simply drag the program you want from the third section into the middle section and its tile will appear where you drop it.

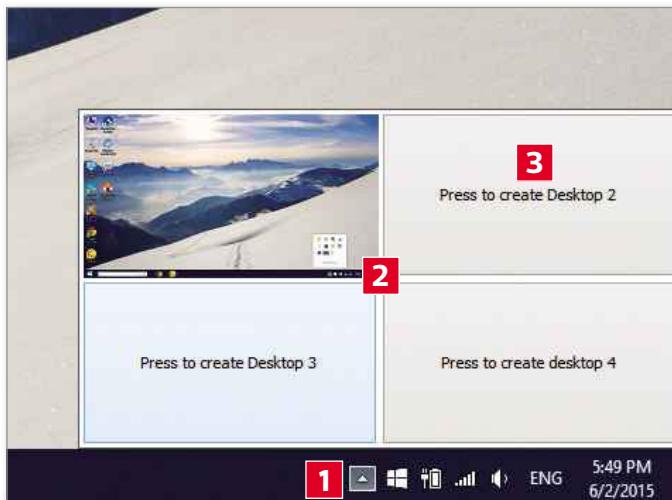
Try Windows 10's tools without installing it



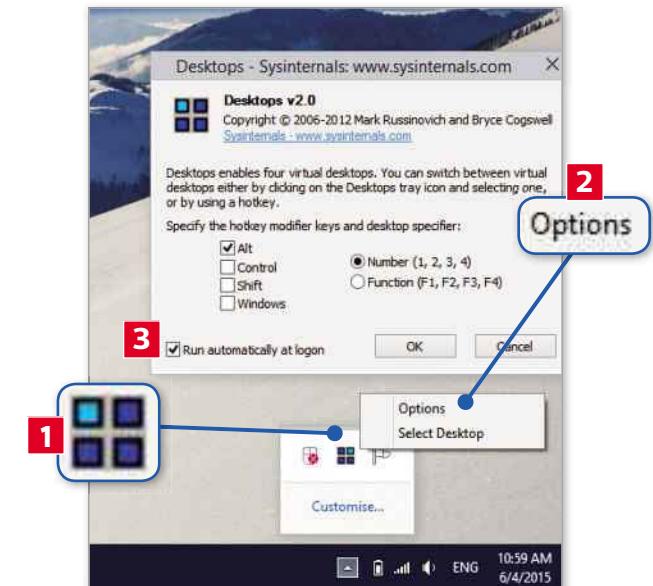
STEP 7 You can add a program's tile to the middle section even if that program doesn't appear in the third section. To do this, click any of the grey '+' tiles **1**. Now name the tile (optional) in the Description field, click the search icon **2**, navigate to that program's setup file (usually in the Programs Files folder on your C: Drive), then click Open. Most programs will automatically add their shortcut logo to the tiles. For those that don't, click the Change button **3**, then click From Library and select the image you want from a list of Windows 10 UX Pack's defaults. Tick Run As Administrator at the bottom (optional), then click the tick icon **4** to add that program's tile to your Start menu.



STEP 8 To tweak the appearance of your Start menu, click the Settings icon **1**, Start Menu Settings, then click the Start menu tab at the top. Here you can change how your Start button appears by selecting a style from the 'Start Menu button style' dropdown menu (Style 1 resembles the Windows 10 Start button the closest). If you want the third section to be shown all the time (rather than only when you move your cursor to the right), then set the 'Expanded menu' dropdown menu to 'Always shown' **2**. The Appearance tab **3** lets you change the Start menu's colour theme.



STEP 9 Another great feature of Windows 10 is **virtual desktops**. Windows 10 UX Pack lets you create four of these (there are no such restrictions in Windows 10). To create these, click the 'Show hidden icons' option **1**, then click the 'Desktop 1' icon (four blue squares). You'll now see four tiles **2** with options to create three more desktops. Click 'Press to create Desktop 2' **3**. You'll see a new (virtual) desktop with identical icons to your Windows Desktop. Open any programs you want here. To switch between virtual desktops, click the 'Show hidden icons' option, then click Desktop 2 (four blue squares) and choose the one you want.



STEP 10 You can also create virtual desktops using keyboard shortcuts. To do this, click the 'Show hidden icons' option, right-click the Desktop 1 icon **1**, then click Options **2**. Now tick the modifier keys you want to use, then select a Number or Function key. Finally, tick 'Run automatically at logon' **3**, then click OK. If you want to see a Windows 10-style logon screen (that appears after you boot your PC), then run Windows 10 UX Pack 3.0 (which should be in your Downloads folder), click the 'Logon screen' dropdown menu, select 'Logon screen', then click the Configure button. ●

Record your PC problems as a video

What you need: TinyTake; Windows 7, 8 or 8.1 **Time required:** 25 minutes

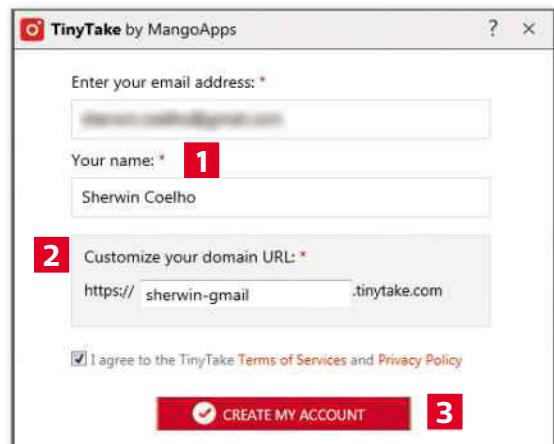
Sometimes the best way to describe a PC problem to a friend or technician is to send them a video of what's happening on your screen. TinyTake is a free program that lets you record on-screen activities and a voice-over (using your PC's mic) to

describe what's happening. You can then save the video to your PC or to TinyTake's secure servers (up to 1GB is free). The default maximum length for each video is five minutes, but we'll show you how to increase this limit for free.



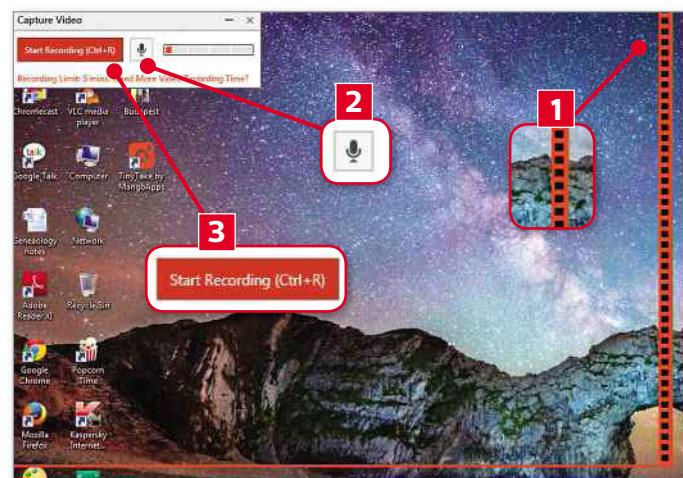
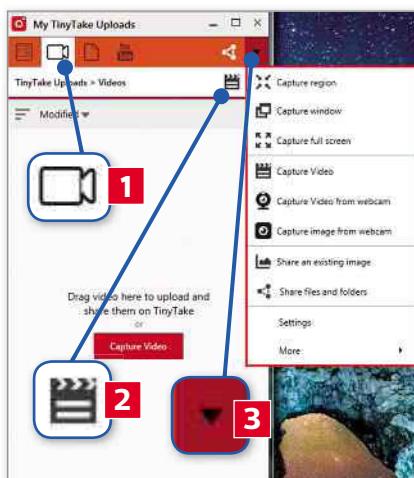
STEP 1 Go to www.snipca.com/16849 and click the orange Download Now button. Run the downloaded setup file and follow the on-screen instructions to install it. You then need to create a free account.

Click the orange 'Create an account' button. Enter your email address and full name **1**. You'll see a URL **2** (which is where your videos will be saved). Tick the box to agree to the T&Cs, then click Create My Account **3**. TinyTake will send you an email with a default password. Open the email, type your password into the TinyTake window, then click Login. You now need to set and confirm a new password. Click Confirm after doing this, then click OK to launch TinyTake.



STEP 2 There are two ways to record a video of what you do on your PC. You can click the Video tab **1**, then the Capture Video icon **2**, or click the dropdown menu **3**, then click Capture Video.

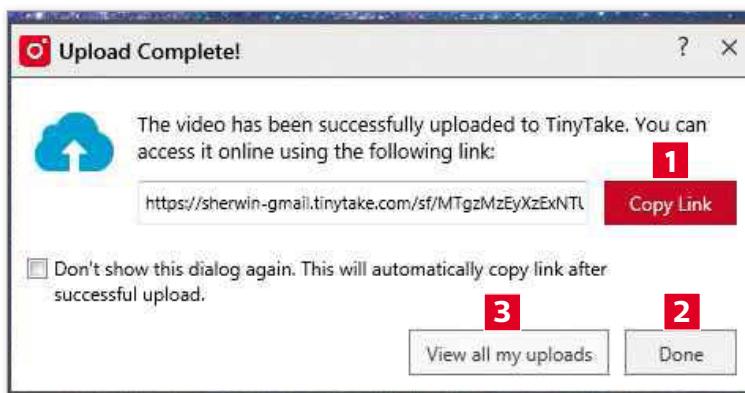
Regardless of which you choose, click and drag your cursor (in the shape of crosshairs) to specify the area of screen you want to record (drag it around the edges of your screen if you want the full picture). The first time you do this you'll see a window showing your PC mic's volume levels. If your PC doesn't have a built-in mic, attach a USB mic. Speak into your mic to check whether the volume level moves, then click OK.



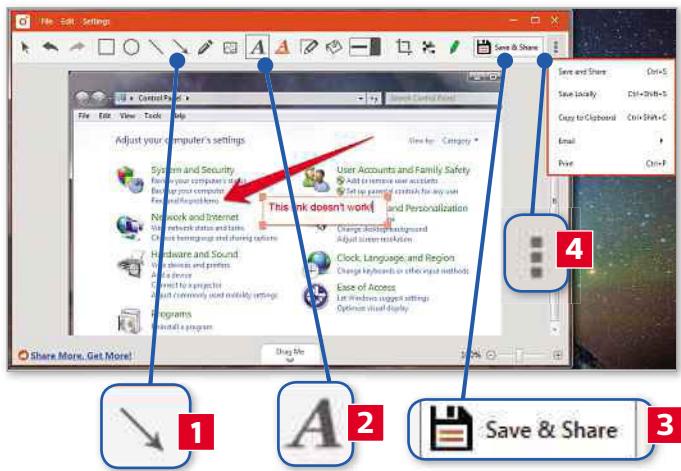
STEP 3 An orange film-strip border **1** will appear around the area of the screen you selected. If you don't want a voiceover, click the microphone icon **2** to mute it. When you're ready, click the Start Recording button **3** or press Ctrl+R. To halt your recording, click the Pause button, then click it again to resume. When you've finished recording, click the Stop icon. The entire area you captured will now appear with an orange tint. Click the Play button to see your recording. If you want to re-record your video, click the Restart icon (two semi-circular arrows) and repeat this step.



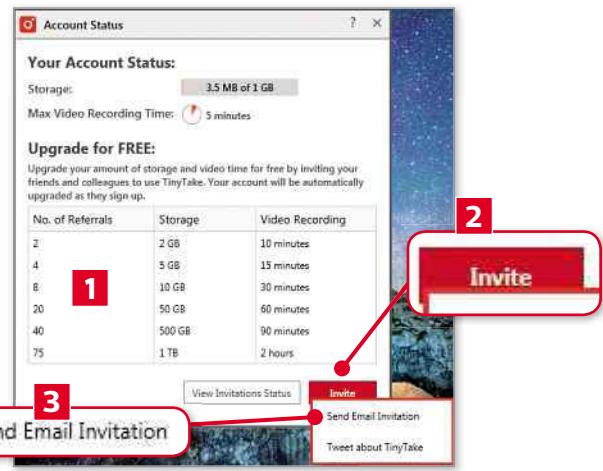
STEP 4 There are two ways to save your video. You can either save it to your PC after which you can email or share it, or you can upload the video to TinyTake, from where the recipient can watch it in their browser. To do the latter, see Step 5. To save the video to your PC, click the floppy-disc icon **1**, then Save Locally **2**, navigate to where you want to save the video on your PC, name it, then click Save. You can now email the video file or share it using a cloud-storage service such as Dropbox or Google Drive. To do the latter, simply open the cloud-storage website you use and drag and drop your video into it. When it finishes uploading, right-click the file, then click Share/Get Link and send the link to whoever you want.



STEP 5 To upload the file to TinyTake, click the orange Save & Share button. You'll see the upload progress in a small window at the bottom right of your Desktop and an Upload Complete pop-up window when it's completed. Click the Copy Link button **1**, then paste it into an email and send it to whoever you want, then click Done **2**. Whoever clicks the link will be taken to your TinyTake web page from where they can play your video in their browser, or download it to their PC. When you add more videos, you can click the 'View all my uploads' button **3** to access them.



STEP 6 You can also capture screenshots using TinyTake. Open the program on your PC, click 'Capture region', then click and drag your cursor to define the screenshot boundaries. To annotate your screenshot with an arrow, click the arrow icon **1**, then click and drag your cursor to position it. Click and drag either end of the arrow to reposition/resize it. To add a text field, click the text icon **2**, then click and drag where you want to position it and start typing. To save the file to TinyTake servers, click the 'Save & Share' button **3**, then follow Step 5 to copy and share the link. If you want to save the screenshot to your PC or email the file, click the three dots **4**, then select what you want.



STEP 7 TinyTake gives you 1GB of free storage space and sets a recording limit of five minutes per video, which should be ample for your needs. However, you can add more storage (up to a maximum of 1TB) and can increase this recording limit (up to two hours) by asking friends to install and use TinyTake. To do this, open TinyTake, then click 'Share More, Get More!' at the bottom. You'll see a list **1** of how many referrals you need to increase your storage and recording time. Click Invite **2**, then Send Email Invitation **3**. Now type the recipients' email addresses in the fields provided, then click Send Invitations. As soon as they create a TinyTake account, you'll get that additional storage space and recording time added to your account. **●**

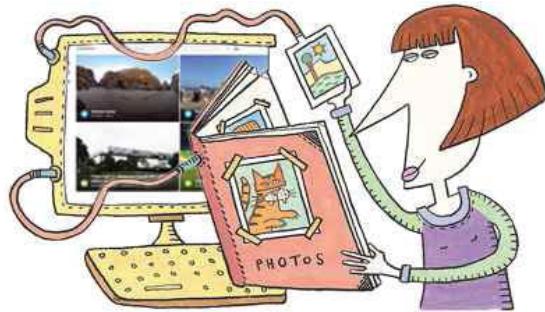
Save and edit pictures in Google Photos

What you need: Google Photos; PC; Android or iOS (phone and tablet)

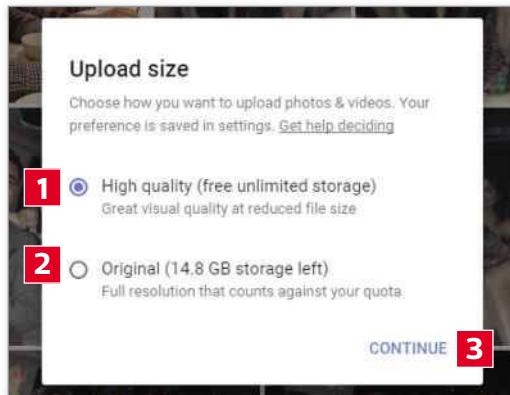
Time required: 30 minutes

We've covered plenty of photo backup and editing services over the years, but none come close to Google's latest offering, Google Photos. The new service lets you save unlimited photos and videos from all your devices for free and edit your photos using simple tools.

Its powerful search function finds photos based on subject matter (people, objects) or a specific location (even if you haven't tagged them). It also automatically creates amazing scrolling 'stories' from photos and videos taken at similar places and times.

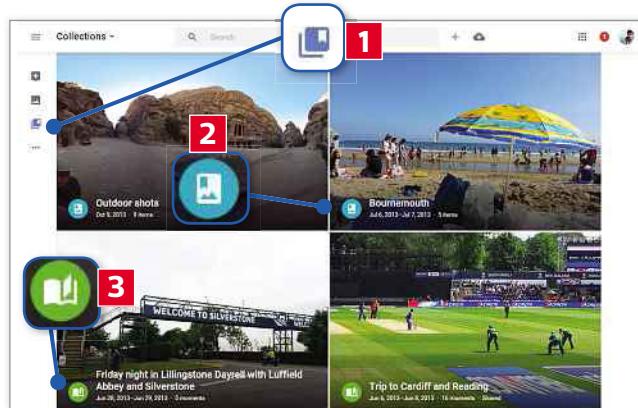


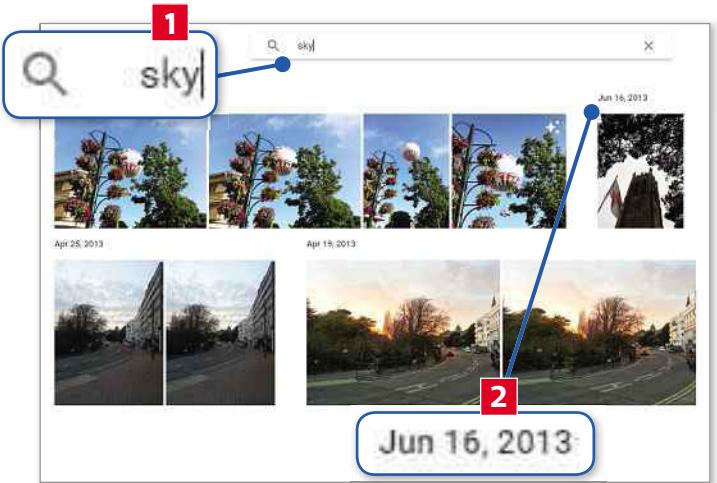
STEP 1 Go to www.photos.google.com, log in with your Gmail account, then keep clicking the right-pointing arrow to swipe through the walkthrough screens. If you have a Google+ profile or use a Google account to save photos to your Android device, you'll instantly see the photo thumbnails from those accounts. Scroll down to see the thumbnails arranged by date (using your photo's **metadata**). To create an album from these photos, click the '+' icon **1**, then tick the photos **2** (and/or videos) you want to add to your album, click **Select** **3**, name your album, then click the top-left Back button.



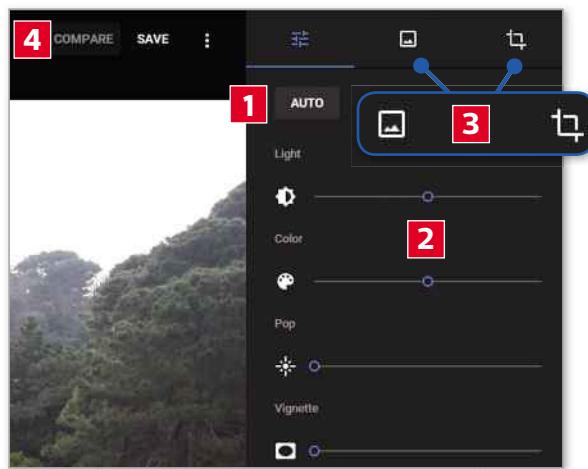
STEP 2 To upload photos and videos from your PC, simply drag and drop them into Google Photos. The first time you do this, you'll be asked to select between 'High quality' and Original. If your camera takes photos at or below 16 **megapixels** and shoots videos at or below **1080p** (which is the case with most cameras), then select 'High quality' **1**. If your files are above these sizes they will be downsized to those limits (in most cases the difference in quality is negligible) and you'll benefit from Google's unlimited free storage. Unless you want professional-level results, don't select Original **2**. This setting retains your original photo/video quality, but you only get 15GB of free space and any photos/videos that are above 16 megapixels/1080p will eat into this. You can buy more space if needed, from \$1.99 (£1.30) a month for an additional 100GB. Click Continue **3** when you've made your choice. After adding your photos, you'll see options to add them to an existing album or create a new one.

STEP 3 Click the Collections icon **1** to view your albums. Turquoise icons **2** indicate albums you've created. Green icons **3** indicate 'stories', which are automatically created and contain photos taken around the same time and place (a holiday trip, for example). Click one to open it, then press the right-arrow key to scroll through. Unlike albums, these contain animations, location tiles, photo collages and **GIFs**, giving your story an artistic touch. You can change your cover photo, add more photos, add photo descriptions or remove photos from these stories by clicking the relevant options as you browse. You can only create your own stories using the mobile app (see Step 7).

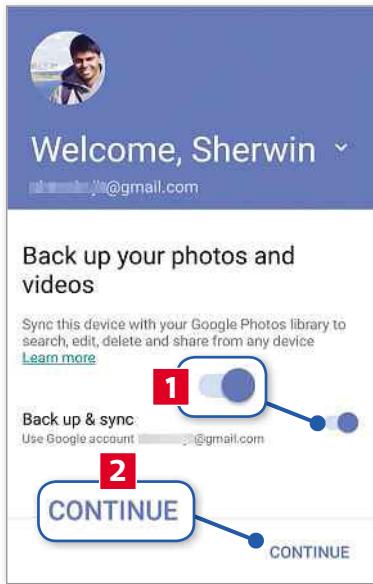




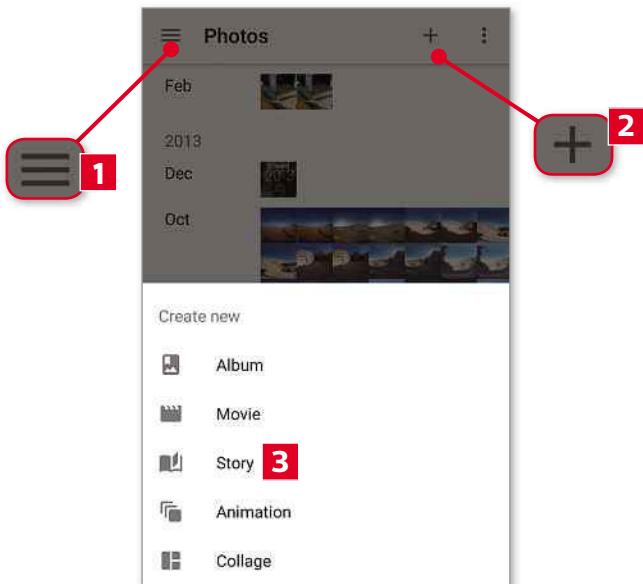
STEP 4 One of the most impressive features of Google Photos is its powerful search tool. Even if you haven't tagged your photos, it automatically detects people, places, objects, environments (night, sky, mountains) or types of photo (panorama, landscape, portraits or screenshots). Try typing terms like **sky** 1, **london 2014**, **night**, **beach**, **Christmas 2012**, **screenshot**, **panorama** or **spain** to see related photos grouped by date 2.



STEP 5 Click any photo to view it in full screen then move your cursor to the top right to see a choice of options. To share a photo, click the Share icon, then share the link. Click the Bin icon to delete a photo or click the three dots, then Download to save it to your PC. Click the pen icon to start editing your photo. The Auto button 1 lets you apply Google's automatic one-click enhancements. Using the sliders 2 you can tweak how the photo looks. The Color Filters and Crop & Rotate tabs 3 let you apply one-click filters, resize your photo and re-orientate it. When you've finished, click and hold the Compare button 4 to contrast it with your original photo, then click Save.



STEP 6 We'll now show you how to use the free Google Photos app. We're using the Android app (www.snipca.com/16824), but the iOS app (www.snipca.com/16825) works in a similar way. Open the app and tap Get Started. To back up and sync all photos on your device, tap the slider 1 to turn it on, then tap Continue 2. Now select 'High quality' (or Original). Tap Continue again and swipe across the introductory screens. You'll now see a similar interface to the website. Pinch your screen to see more photos by date. You can tap a photo to expand it, then tap the Share icon to create a link, the pen icon to edit it or the Bin icon to delete it.



STEP 7 To see your albums, tap the three lines 1, then tap Collections. To create stories using the photos on your device (see Step 3), tap the '+' symbol 2, then tap Story 3 (you can also tap Collage, Album, Animation or Movie – the procedures for these are similar). Now tap to select all the photos you want to add to your story, then tap Create at the top right. When that's done, you can tap to open it, then swipe right to view your story. Photos you delete are saved for 60 days. To access these photos, click the three lines at the top left, then Bin. Now tap a photo, then tap the three dots at the top right to see options to restore or permanently delete it. ●

Print every file in a folder instantly

What you need: 2Printer, Windows XP, Vista, 7, 8 or 8.1 **Time required:** 10 minutes

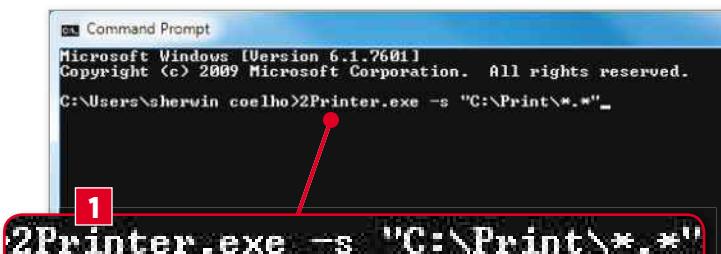
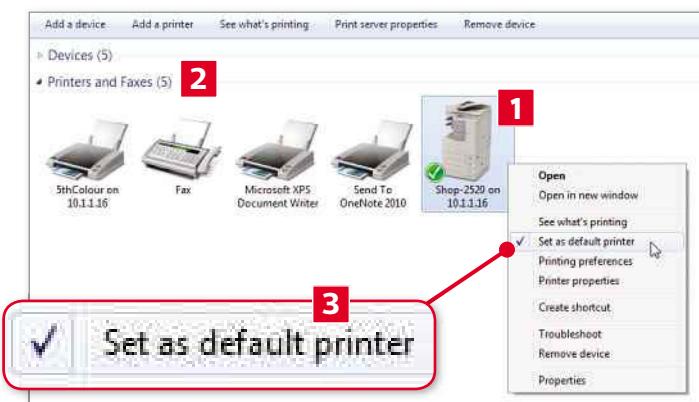
Windows doesn't let you print files of different types within the same folder all in one go. Instead, you have to right-click each file, click Print, then give the Print command again from within its native program (Word for documents, Adobe Reader for PDFs,

Photo Viewer for photos, and so on).

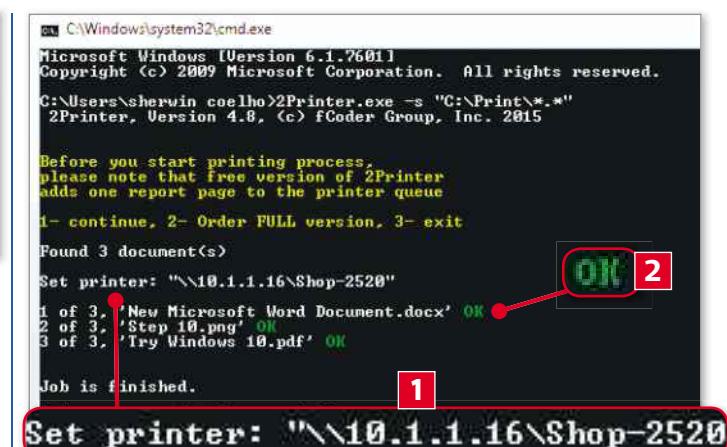
2Printer is a brilliant free program that lets you print all the files (of any type) within a folder with one tap on your keyboard using the Windows Command Prompt. You can even specify how many copies you want.



STEP 1 To download 2Printer, go to www.doc2prn.com/download and click the 'Download now!' button. Click the downloaded setup file and follow the steps to install it. Close the ReadMe notepad file with instructions – we'll show you what to do instead. You first need to select your default printer so 2Printer knows which one to use. To do this, open the Start menu, click 'Devices and Printers', right-click the printer you want **1** (in the 'Printers and Faxes' section **2**), then click 'Set as default printer' **3**. You'll see a green tick on that printer.



STEP 2 Now create a folder named 'Print' on your C Drive and add all the files you want to print there. To do this, open your C Drive, click 'New folder' at the top, name the folder 'Print', then press Enter. Now drag and drop (or copy and paste) all the files you want to print here. To print all these files in one go, open your Command Prompt by pressing the Windows key, typing cmd, then pressing Enter. Now carefully type the following command: 2Printer.exe -s "C:\Print*.*" **1**, then press Enter. Here, we're first specifying the program (2Printer) and '-s' stands for the source folder containing our files, which is defined within the quotation marks.



STEP 3 Finally, press 1 on your keyboard to confirm you don't mind 2Printer printing an additional page (this is the only drawback of the free version). You'll immediately see a message telling you which printer your job has been sent to **1** and OK messages will appear at the end of each file **2** as soon as they've been printed. If you want to print more than one copy of all the files in the folder, then simply add a space followed by -copies 2 after your print command, so that it should now read: 2Printer.exe -s "C:\Print*.*" -copies 2. You can, of course, replace '2' with the number of copies that you want.

NEXT ISSUE

ONSALE
8 July

- Use Windows 10's superb new browser
- Record how many steps you walk
- Remove duplicate files for free
- Convert scanned files into docs to edit

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TIP OF THE FORTNIGHT

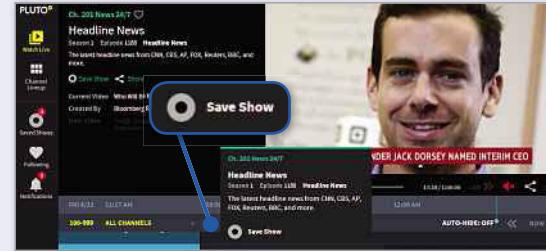
Download the program that turns YouTube into a TV

Many moons ago, you featured the brilliant website www.pluto.tv that turns YouTube into an online TV (see Readers' Tips, Issue 422). Pluto TV consists of handily categorised channels (such as News, Education, Sports, Kids and Art & Culture), each featuring more specific sections (such as Nature, Science and Space in the Education channel). Simply select the section you want and start watching a never-ending stream of related content.

The other day, I was watching one of the News channels when the website prompted me to download its new free PC program. To download it, go to the website, click the download icon at the

bottom left (middle of the top row of three), then click Download Now. Run the downloaded setup file to install it. This is a **beta** version, but it works fine.

Click the new Channel Lineup button on the left to see the site's 10 channels and sections (click any one to start watching it). Create a free user account (by clicking 'Hello! Sign Up' at the bottom left). Once you've done this, you can save programmes that have already aired or ones that are scheduled to start later. To do that, click the show you want to save on your



timeline, then click Save Show (see screenshot). Now click the Saved Shows section on the left. Here, you can instantly watch saved shows that have already aired and saved scheduled programmes as soon as they have aired.

Barry Forbes



The winner of every Tip of the Fortnight wins this exclusive Computeractive mug!

SECURITY

Disable Apple's two-step verification

When I first bought my new iPad, I enabled **two-step verification** on my Apple account because I use it when I'm out and about and was worried about losing it or having it stolen. However, I find it annoying that in order to log back in to certain apps like FaceTime or Apple Maps, or access my Apple account via the internet, I need to type in the extra four-digit security code. I therefore decided to disable two-step verification which, thankfully, is easy to do.

Go to <https://appleid.apple.com>, click the blue 'Manage your Apple ID' button on the right and log in with your Apple account details. You now need to log in using the two-step verification you set up. Choose the device or email address you want to receive your four-digit code on, then type that code when prompted.

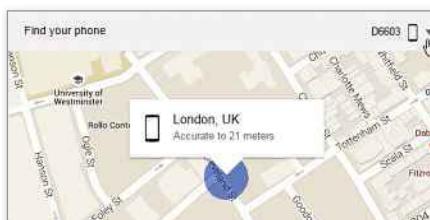
Now click the 'Password and Security' section on the left, then click 'Turn off two-step verification' at the bottom. You'll need to select three security questions (using dropdown menus) and provide answers to them. These will be used to verify your identity should you ever forget your password. When you've finished, click Continue at the bottom, then click 'Turn off' to disable two-step verification.

Jack Cordell

BROWSER

Find your lost phone using Google Chrome

The other day I was watching the Champions League final in my local pub. When I got home, I realised that I'd lost my phone. As luck would have it, my stepson was home from University and saved the day (and my phone).



He opened Google Chrome on our PC (apparently this doesn't work on other browsers) and simply typed **find my phone** into it. Next, I saw a map and was asked to log in using the Google account I use on my Android phone. I immediately saw my phone's approximate location shown on a map (see screenshot above). Click the Ring option at the bottom left. This makes your phone ring at full volume for five minutes or until someone switches it off.

A few minutes later a friend who'd been watching the game with me called to say he'd found my phone at the pub after I left and has it with him.

Peter Hale

ANTIVIRUS

Update outdated programs and scan for unsafe add-ons

I recently bought a new Windows 8.1 PC, which came with a three-month free trial of Norton Security. I didn't want to continue paying for it after the free trial, so I uninstalled it and installed Avast Free Antivirus 2015 (from www.snipca.com/16912).

One of its best features is the ability to scan your PC for out-of-date software. To do this, click the Scan dropdown menu on the left, then click 'Scan for outdated software'. It then lists these and gives you the option to update them with one click (see screenshot below). Don't bother clicking 'Activate automatic updates' as you'll be prompted to upgrade to the paid-for version of Avast.

Now click the same Scan dropdown menu, then 'Scan for browser add-ons'. This scans your browsers for bundled extras that are considered to be unsafe and gives you the option to remove them with one click.

Ed Collier



ANDROID

Instantly search words or phrases in Chrome

The Chrome mobile browser (www.snipca.com/16860) now lets you run a Google search for a word or phrase by simply tapping the word/phrase, then tapping the Google icon that appears below it.

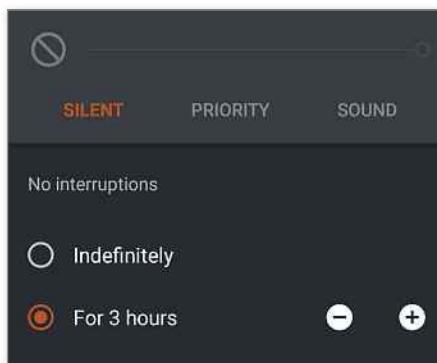
When you're reading an article in Chrome and want to get more information about a word or its definition, simply tap it (on some websites, you'll need to tap and hold it). Next, drag the sliders to select it, then tap the circular, blue Google icon at the bottom of your screen. The first time you do this, you'll need to tap Allow. Now swipe up to see all the Google search results for your selected word/phrase with relevant links that you can tap to open.

ANDROID

Silence your phone for a set period of time

If you have a device running the latest version of Android (5.0 or above, called Lollipop), then you can set it to Silent mode for a set interval (anything from 15 minutes to eight hours). This is useful if you don't want to be disturbed during that time (for example, if you want to take a nap or are at the cinema).

To set this, press either volume button (up or down) at the side of your device,



then tap Silent. If you have a Nexus device running the latest version of Android (5.1.1.), tap None, then tap the dropdown menu below it.

By default, Silent mode is set to Indefinitely, but you can tap the '+' or '-' symbols beside the 'For set time' option below to set the number of minutes/ hours you want the device to be in Silent mode (see screenshot above). Your device will automatically revert to the Sound mode after that time has elapsed.

ANDROID

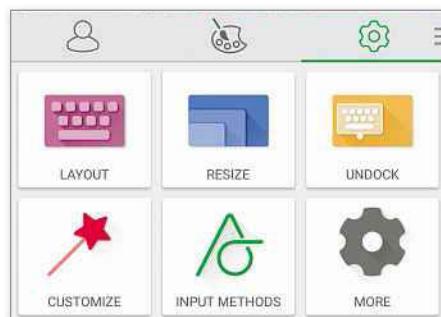
Change the theme, size and layout of your keyboard

SwiftKey Keyboard is one of the best free third-party Android keyboard apps. It lets you swipe across the keyboard to register keystrokes rather than tap to form words, and provides word suggestions in a bar at the top of your keyboard based on what you type. The latest app update has made it

easier to change your keyboard themes, resize your keyboard and choose from different keyboard layouts.

Install and open the app (www.snipca.com/16861), then follow the instructions to set it as your default keyboard. If you're using it for the first time, log in with a Google account when prompted. This is useful because the app saves everything you type, so if you install it on another device and log in with the same account, your suggestions will be informed by terms you have previously typed.

Now open any app that requires you to type, then tap the text field to bring up SwiftKey Keyboard. Tap the three lines at the top left of the keyboard to see the three new sections. The first section (top left) displays statistics on the number of words the app successfully predicted for you and how many typing errors it corrected. The middle section lets you choose from different keyboard themes (of varying colours). The final section (see screenshot below) lets you change your keyboard's layout (how the keys are



Best New Apps

Pixelmator

£3.99

iOS: www.snipca.com/16865

This powerful photo-editing app, which launched on iPads last year, is now available for iPhones. It lets you apply one-touch filter effects, blur and sharpen selected portions of an image, and even cut and paste objects from one image to another. If you've already bought the iPad app, then you can install this for free.



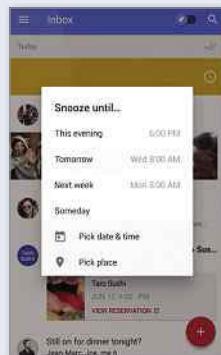
Inbox by Gmail

Free

Android: www.snipca.com/16867

iOS: www.snipca.com/16868

Previously invite-only, Google's email-managing app for Gmail is now available for



everyone. A new feature is the ability to retrieve an email that you've sent by tapping the Undo button that appears. The app also lets you delay emails until a specified time or when you reach a particular place.

What you should install this fortnight

CloudMesh Pro

£1.49

Windows Phone: www.snipca.com/16869

This brilliant file manager lets you access the files on your device, SD card and cloud-storage services, including



OneDrive, Google Drive, Box and Dropbox. You can then batch-select and move items from one location to another or simply delete, upload, download or email multiple items in one go.

arranged), resize the keyboard (choose from two larger or two smaller options) and undock it (this lets you tap and move the keyboard to position it anywhere you want on the screen).

ANDROID & iOS

Create a collage from your photos



Instagram is one of the most popular ways to share photos and its new, free app – called 'Layout from Instagram' – lets you create stunning collages using photos on your device. We'll use the iOS app (www.snipca.com/16863) for this tip, but the Android app (www.snipca.com/16862) works in a similar way.

Install and open the app, swipe across the instruction screens, tap Get Started, then OK to grant the app access to your photos. You'll now see three sections at the bottom – Camera Roll (all the photos on your device), Faces (photos of people) and Recents (most recent photos). To create your collage, select the section you want, then tap to select the photos you want to include in your collage.

These will automatically appear in different collage layouts at the top. Swipe across to browse the layouts, then tap the one you want. You can now customise each photo within the layout by tapping it, then moving the blue slider to extend it in that direction (see screenshot below). To replace a particular photo, tap



it, then tap Replace and select another one. You can create a mirror image of a photo by tapping that option, and rotate the image (by 180 degrees) by tapping Flip. When you've finished making your edits, tap Save at the top right, then Done.

iOS

Save and queue Spotify tracks using swipe gestures



If you use Spotify on your iPhone or iPad (www.snipca.com/16864), you can now save tracks to the Your Music section and queue tracks (to play next) using simple swipe gestures. Tracks in the Your Music section are available to play offline and can be accessed by tapping the three lines at the



top left, then Your Music.

Open any Spotify playlist. To queue a track, simply swipe its left edge to the right (see screenshot above). To save a track to the Your Music section, tap its right edge and swipe to the left. If a track is already saved, then repeating this gesture will remove it from the Your Music section.

Games With Kids

What to play together on your phone and tablet

AGES 0-5

Sago Mini Forest Flyer

£2.29 www.snipca.com/16870 (iOS)

In this fun game, your toddler needs to tap and drag Robin the bird through a number of obstacles in the forest. Whenever they see a yellow marker, they need to direct the bird to it, after which a short animated clip will play. After they finish you can ask them to describe the places and animals they saw on the screen.



AGES 6-10

Word Academy

Free www.snipca.com/16871 (Android)

Free www.snipca.com/16872 (iOS)

In this challenging word-search game, your child links adjoining letters in a grid to form words that correspond to the number of letters in the boxes below. As they improve, the levels of difficulty increase and there are hundreds of them to complete. You can buy 'hint packs' to help complete levels faster.

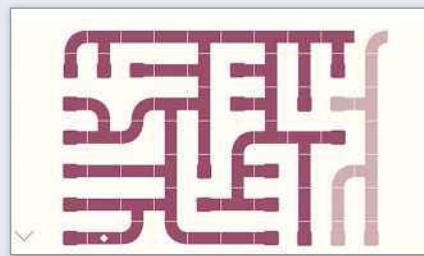


AGES 11-16

Noodles

£1.49 www.snipca.com/16873 (iOS)

This addictive puzzle game will keep your teenager entertained for hours. They need to join all the 'noodles' by tapping them to rotate each one in the correct direction. The fewer moves they take to complete a level, the more points they get. They can set the difficulty level from the app's settings.

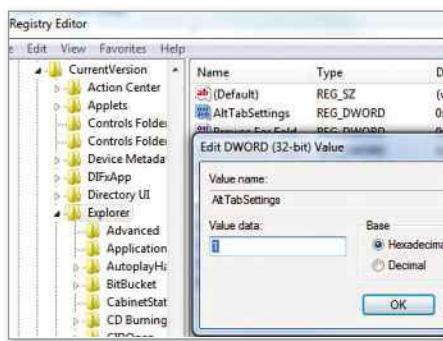


WINDOWS 7, 8, 8.1

Use an XP-style program switcher



In every Windows OS since XP, pressing Alt+Tab has let you switch between open programs on your Desktop. Try it out by keeping the Alt key pressed, then repeatedly pressing the Tab key to move between your open programs. You'll see these programs represented as tiles on a grid. Simply release the Alt key when you reach the tile of the program you want to use.



If you ever used this shortcut in Windows XP, you'd have seen program icons instead of tiles. If you're a former XP user who preferred this interface to the more recent tile-based grid, there's an easy way to revert to it.

Press the Windows key, type `regedit.exe` and press Enter to open the Registry Editor. Next, navigate to the following key by clicking the dropdown menus beside each option: `HKEY_CURRENT_USER\Software\Microsoft\Windows\CurrentVersion`. Click the Explorer folder (under CurrentVersion), then right-click in its right-hand pane. Next, move your cursor to New, click 'DWORD (32-bit) Value' and name it `AltTabSettings`. Now right-click `AltTabSettings`, click Modify, type **1** in the 'Value data' field (see screenshot above), then click OK and close your Registry Editor. Now press Alt+Tab to see your new Windows XP-style icon-based program switcher.

If you ever want to revert to the tile-based switcher, then open your Registry Editor, navigate to the same Explorer folder, right-click `AltTabSettings`, click Delete, then restart your PC.

WINDOWS 7, 8, 8.1

Remove the Windows 10 icon from your Taskbar



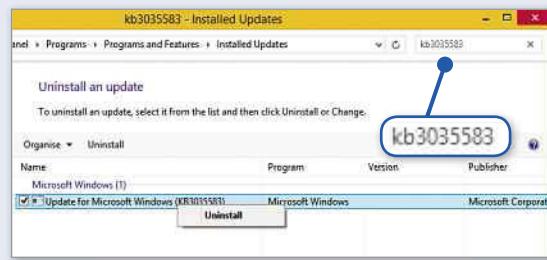
In the past few weeks you may have noticed a small Windows 10 icon at the bottom right of your Taskbar. Clicking this reveals a notification about Microsoft's new operating system (released on 29 July) and lets you reserve your copy by providing your email address.

This icon cannot be removed/hidden from your Taskbar by right-clicking it, but there is a way to get rid of it. You first need to identify, then uninstall the specific Windows update that added the icon. To do that, open Control Panel, click 'Uninstall a program', then click 'View installed updates' at the top left. You'll see a list of all the Windows updates added to your PC.

You now need to locate the update called KB3035583. The fastest way to do this is to type **kb3035583** in the search box at the top right (see screenshot). Now right-click

the update, click Uninstall, then Yes. You'll see a notification when that's done and the Windows 10 icon will have vanished from your Taskbar. If you still see it, restart your PC.

To ensure the same update doesn't get reinstalled when your PC next updates, you need to hide it. To do that, press the Windows key, type **windows update** and press Enter. You should see a notification link stating '[number] important updates are available'. Click it to see all your pending updates. Now right-click the one labelled KB3035583, then click 'Hide update'. This will prevent it from being installed and keep the Windows 10 icon from reappearing.



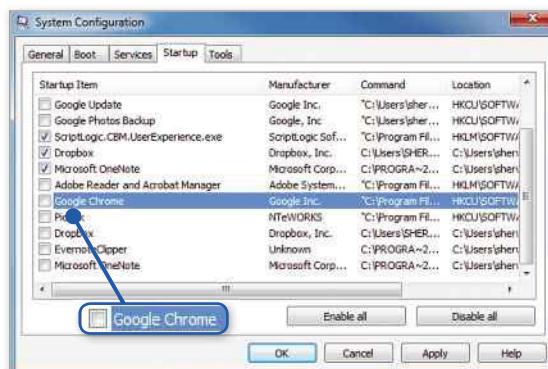
WINDOWS 7, 8, 8.1

Stop Google Chrome eating into your PC's resources



Google Chrome is notorious for hogging your PC's resources. This is because the browser launches at startup and keeps running in the background even after you close it. Therefore, you can give your PC a much-needed speed boost by disabling Chrome at startup and stopping it from running in the background.

To remove it from startup, press Windows+R to bring up the Run dialogue box, type `msconfig.exe`, then press Enter. Click the Startup tab, untick Google Chrome (see screenshot below left), click Apply, then OK. To stop the program running in the background, click the triangular 'Show hidden icons' button at the right of your Taskbar, right-click the Chrome icon, then click 'Let Chrome run in the background' to untick it.



WINDOWS 10

Change your Windows 10 login photo

Windows 10 uses the photo from your Microsoft (Outlook or Hotmail) account on your login screen at startup, but there's an easy way to change this. Click the Start button, right-click your user account name at the top left of the Start menu, then click 'Change account settings'. Click the Browse button below your current photo, navigate to the one you want, then click 'Choose picture' at the bottom right.

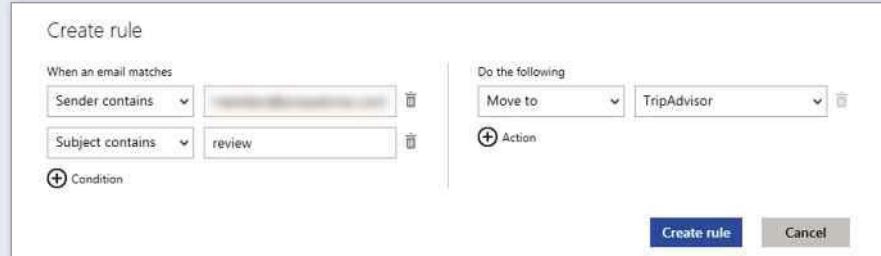
OUTLOOK.COM

Automatically send emails to specific folders

 As with its PC program counterpart, Outlook.com has a powerful 'rules' system that lets you set criteria that will automatically send certain emails you receive to specific folders. Criteria can include the sender's name or specific words in the subject line. In our example, we'll show you how to send all emails you receive from TripAdvisor containing the word 'review' in the subject line to a newly created folder.

First, log into Outlook.com using your Outlook or Hotmail account. Click the 'New folder' link at the bottom of the left-hand pane, name the folder and press Enter. Next, open the folder, click the 'make rules' link at the top, then click New to start creating your rule.

In the 'Create rule' window you'll see two sections – 'When an email matches'



on the left and 'Do the following' on the right (see screenshot). Along with dropdown menus and text fields, you'll see '+' options at the bottom where you can refine your rules. First, click the 'When an email matches' dropdown menu, select 'Sender contains' and type the TripAdvisor email address (or whichever email address you want) in the adjacent field. Now click the '+' Condition' option at the bottom, click the dropdown menu that appears, select

'Subject contains' and type **review** (or whatever you want) in the adjacent field.

Now click the 'Do the following' dropdown menu, select 'Move to', click the adjoining dropdown menu, then select the folder you created. Finally, click the 'Create rule' button. In future, all emails you receive from TripAdvisor that contain the word 'review' in the subject line will automatically appear in the dedicated folder you created.

POWERPOINT

Add a video to your presentation and trim it

 It's easy to insert videos into your presentation, but too many long videos will increase its file size. This will extend the time it takes to load, eat into your storage space and potentially bore your audience. Therefore, it's a good idea to keep your videos short. Thankfully, it's easy to trim them within PowerPoint.

To add a video, navigate to the relevant slide, click the Insert tab, then click the Video option at the top right. Now



navigate to the video on your PC, then click Insert.

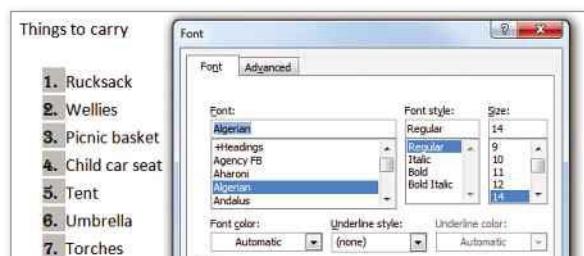
To trim your video, right-click it, then click Trim Video. You'll see the footage in a preview window with a green and a red slider, representing its start and end points (see screenshot below left). Simply drag sliders to where you want the video to start and end, click the Play icon to watch your edited clip and make sure you're happy with it, then click OK to trim it.

You can embellish your video by reshaping its frame, or adding a border and visual effects (including shadows and reflections). To add these, click the video, followed by the Format tab at the top, then click the relevant dropdown menus in the Video Styles section and select the effects you want.

WORD

Format only numbers in a list

 If you regularly use numbered lists and would like to differentiate the numbers from the listed items, there is a quick way to format only the numbers. To create a numbered list, click the 1, 2, 3 button in the Paragraph section of the Home tab, then type your list. To format only



the numbers (independent of the text), click any number in the list (you'll notice that all the other numbers in the list are now selected as well). Right-click the number, then click Font. Now choose your Font, 'Font style' and Size (see screenshot), then click OK to apply your changes.

OFFICE

Hide the Ribbon interface with a quick keyboard shortcut

 Since Office 2007, every Office program has featured the Ribbon interface (featuring tabs at the top that contain more detailed sections). The Ribbon can sometimes be a distraction, especially if you're doing tasks that don't require any formatting, such as typing a letter in Word. Hiding the Ribbon also lets you see more of the program you're using. The fastest way to hide/show the Ribbon is to press **Ctrl+F1**.



Google Earth Pro

Measure 3D buildings and landmarks, make Google Earth Pro faster and easier to use – and even explore Mars

Measure objects and distances in 3D

The measurement tools in the standard version of Google Earth are limited to the planet's two surface dimensions, but with Google Earth Pro (GEP, now free from www.snipca.com/16836) you can reach for the skies with a set of 3D rulers.



Use Google Earth Pro's 3D ruler to measure heights or calculate the area of 3D surfaces

First, enable 3D objects by ticking both the 3D Buildings and Terrain boxes in the Layers pane. Now find an object of interest, and orient the view ready for your measurement (see next tip for help with orientation). Next, open the Tools menu and choose Ruler, then select the '3D path' tab. To measure height, for example, left-click once at the foot of a building or object and then left-click at the top. To measure a 3D area – such as the front of a 3D building – select the '3D

polygon' tab, then click repeatedly to mark a quick outline of the building's frontage.

Navigate in smaller steps using your keyboard

The fastest way to move around the planet is to use your mouse, but when fine-tuning a view, try the keyboard. Tapping the cursor (arrow) keys, for example, moves you around in very small steps. Then, get the angle just right by holding down Control (Ctrl) and tapping the arrow keys. To set the perfect elevation and viewpoint, hold down the Shift key and tap up, down, left or right. You can also hold down Ctrl+Shift while using the mouse, for similar control. The program has loads of keyboard shortcuts – visit www.snipca.com/16828 for a full list.

Avoid getting lost

Earth is a big place and when you're zooming in and out it's easy to lose your bearings. To keep tabs on your location, enable the overview map by pressing Ctrl+M (press this again to switch it off).

The overview map is quite small by default, but you can increase its size, and even make it alter its own zoom level. Open Options from the Tools menu, then

in the Overview Map section on the 3D View tab, experiment with the Map Size and Zoom Relation sliders.

Use Street View on Earth and beyond

Google's fantastic Street View photography is fully integrated with Google Earth Pro. Zoom in close enough to see individual roads, then drag and drop the little orange chap into place. Hold for a moment before dropping him, and roads with available Street View images will be highlighted in blue.

While in Street View mode, click the building icon to the left of the Exit Street View button to see a 3D recreation of the area. Image quality isn't as impressive as on the Street View website (www.snipca.com/16838) but depth is represented better, so you'll get a great feel for the shapes and textures of the displayed area.

Also check out the Explore option on the View menu, where you'll find Sky, Mars and Moon as options. To get started with GEP's space-travel features, see our recent Workshop (page 40, Issue 449) – then go to the Layers pane and explore the tickboxes for further options.



Enjoy Street View photography or switch to 3D models to appreciate depth

Tricks to speed up Google Earth Pro

GEP is a huge program and it can run slowly on the average PC, with jerky animation and unresponsive controls. However, you can use hidden settings to make things smoother and faster. First, open the Tools menu and choose Options. In the Texture Colors section on the 3D View tab, choose the High



Color button (instead of True Color) and, in the Anisotropic Filtering section, select Off. Also clear the tick from both the 'Use high quality terrain...' and the 'Use photorealistic atmosphere rendering (EXPERIMENTAL)' boxes in the Terrain section. Now restart the program.

Make labels easier to read

You should increase the font size if your eyesight struggles with the text labels in the main viewing window. Click Tools, then Options, select the 3D View tab and then click the Choose 3D Font button. Type a bigger figure into the Size field, or click one in the list, then click OK.



Smart teddy bears

They may sound cute, but will Google use these furry friends to spy on us?

What are they?

Internet-connected toys that appear to come alive when children interact with them. It's yet another idea from Google that sounds as mad as it does fun. The company applied for a patent for the concept in 2012 (www snipca.com/16743), receiving approval in May.

What do they do?

Interpret the commands of children playing with them, and "express curiosity" through a series of actions, such as tilting and scratching their heads, as well as furrowing their brows. A camera and microphone would be installed in the head of the toy, picking up the gestures and voice of the child.

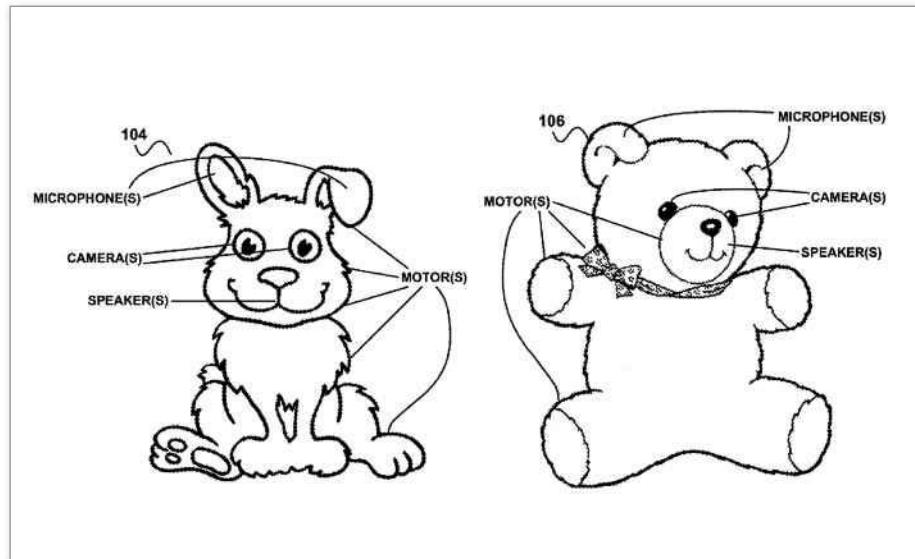
Doesn't that sound a bit creepy?

Many people think so, with some comparing it to the psychotic doll Chucky in the *Child's Play* horror films (www snipca.com/16791).

Security concerns have been raised by privacy campaigners, who are worried by the devices' ability to record conversations and 'see' the user. But the point is that these devices aren't just for children. Google wants adults to use them too.

Will adults want to use teddy bears?

Probably not, which is why Google's description in the patent goes beyond teddies to include "a doll or toy that



resembles a human, an animal, a mythical creature or an inanimate object". That hardly rules anything out. Clearly, Google will make any device that it thinks it can sell, so instead of teddy bears you may soon be able to control your home using a miniature David Beckham, Darth Vader, Homer Simpson, Loch Ness Monster, a dancing panda or even Chucky itself (which horror fans would love).

But what will adults use them for?

That's the key question. Google sees these attractive devices as fun ways to control household objects that are connected to the web, such as smart TVs, fridges, thermostats and music systems. These objects are growing in popularity. There are more than 40 million of them in the UK alone, rising to around 360 million by 2020 according to some analysts.

But Google thinks that people find it hard to control these objects using the existing online interfaces. It hopes they will find it easier to talk to toy-like devices that generate an emotional response. It's all part of the battle to persuade you to spend money on the 'internet of things', the clumsy phrase used to describe objects that are

connected to the web, but aren't computers, tablets or phones.

So why all the fuss about teddy bears?

Because one appeared in the diagram accompanying the patent (see main image), next to a toy rabbit that looks like it has seen better days. All the talk of toys is a bit distracting. It's more accurate to see Google's patent as just a friendlier version of the Amazon Echo (www.amazon.com/echo).

What's that?

A 9-inch cylinder that responds to your voice commands to play music and control household objects (see image left). It launched in the US last year priced \$199 (around £130). Amazon hasn't confirmed whether it will arrive in the UK.

Will the bears be the must-buy present this Christmas?

No, nor, we suspect, the Christmas after. The idea has been so badly received that Google will probably think twice about marketing it to children. But adults will be targeted soon, raising the prospect of you asking Homer Simpson to turn your heating on and off.



Like Google's teddy bears, Amazon's Echo performs tasks by responding to your voice

Delete ALL JUNK FILES

Your hard drive is choking on giant junk files. Jane Hoskyn reveals how to find your PC's space hogs and delete them completely

Hard drives are getting bigger, but digital files are getting bigger faster. Two minutes of video shot on a budget smartphone equals around 200MB. Ten minutes is a gigabyte (GB). Save that 10-minute clip to your PC, create a couple of edited versions and an accidental duplicate or three, and suddenly your humble video has swallowed a tenth of your hard drive – far more space than you can free up every time you run CCleaner.

The trouble with big files

It's not really fair to compare CCleaner's haul of digital sewage with your digital video. One is a pointless waste of space, while the other is a personal treasure and a marvel of modern technology.

Massive files are, in themselves, brilliant. We love that it's possible to take a 46TB (terabyte) photo like the image of Mont Blanc (www.in2white.com; see News, Issue 451), and we

certainly don't miss the horribly low-resolution digital photos we were taking 10 years ago. You can store all your favourite films on your PC, export your entire email archive as one file and keep a library's worth of books on your Desktop. It's wonderful, but your hard drive can't keep up. Big files are choking your PC to death.

Don't feel too sorry for your computer, though, because it's creating at least as many massive files as you are. Windows constantly makes vast backup files and hoards them in locked folders, where they take up far more space than much-maligned **caches** and temporary files.

In this feature, we'll show you how to track down your biggest files, including the ones Windows tries to hide from you. Then we'll reveal the best new ways to stop big files suffocating your PC – including blitzing them to smithereens.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

- Use built-in tools to discover your PC's biggest junk files
- Instantly see which folders and files take up the most space
- Weed out pointless files and folders that Windows hides
- Delete large files and folders quickly using easy Windows hacks



Delete all junk files

FIND YOUR PC'S BIGGEST FILES AND FOLDERS

Discover your PC's biggest file using Explorer

Windows Explorer, latterly File Explorer, is surprisingly good at rooting out your PC's enormous files. Its size-search tools are almost as well-hidden as the gargantuan Windows backups we'll come to later, but they're easy and versatile, and useful for much more than just finding big files.

Whatever version of Windows you're running, start by opening Explorer and clicking the drive (such as 'Local Disk (C:)'), Library (for example, Pictures) or folder you want to search. Choose the C: drive if you want to find the biggest file on your entire PC, which can take ages; choose a Library or folder if you'd rather not wait all day for the results to appear.

In Windows XP, Vista and 7, click in the search box at the top-right, then click the little blue 'Size:' link under 'Add a search filter'. This opens a dropdown menu of size ranges, from 'Empty (0KB)' (interesting, but not relevant here) to 'Gigantic (>128MB)'. Don't bother clicking Medium or Large, especially if you're searching your whole PC – go straight for Gigantic (see screenshot above right).

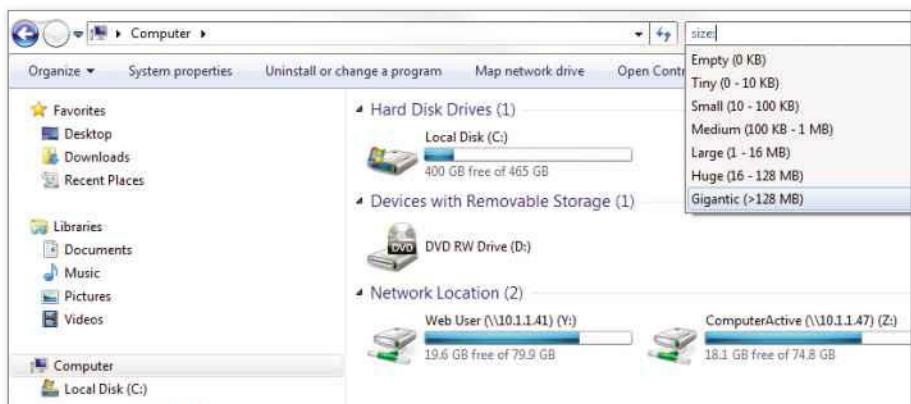
In Windows 8/8.1, click Search This PC in File Explorer to open the Search 'ribbon' (you may have to click the Search Tools tab to make the ribbon appear). Click Size to open a dropdown menu containing Empty, Gigantic and so on, then click one to see matching files. You can then narrow the search using other dropdown boxes, including Kind (such as Video, Program or 'Picture' – that's photo to you and me), 'Date modified' and more.

A few moments or minutes later (depending on your drive/folder size), you'll see an unsorted list of whopping great files. To see the biggest file at the top, click the 'Change your view' icon, select Details and then click the Size column heading.

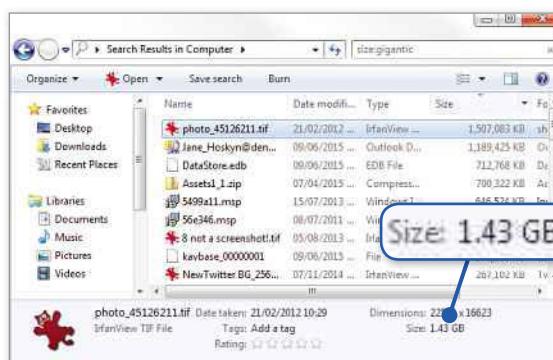
Unhelpfully, file sizes are listed in kilobytes (KB), so they look like a bunch of random phone numbers. Click an item to see its size in more sensible MB or GB measures in the bottom window (see smaller screenshot above).

Hack Explorer to find big files faster

If you find Explorer's dropdown menus too fiddly (we do), bypass them completely by typing your filters instead.



Use Windows Explorer's 'Gigantic' search filter to find your PC's biggest files



A single digital photo can be bigger than 1GB – as we discovered after a quick search in Explorer

For example, type `size:gigantic` into the Explorer search box and press Enter to find files over 128MB in your selected location. You can be even more specific if you prefer. Type `size:>500MB` to find files larger than 500MB, or even `size:>50GB` – whatever you deem gigantic. If you find yourself sorting a list of files bigger than

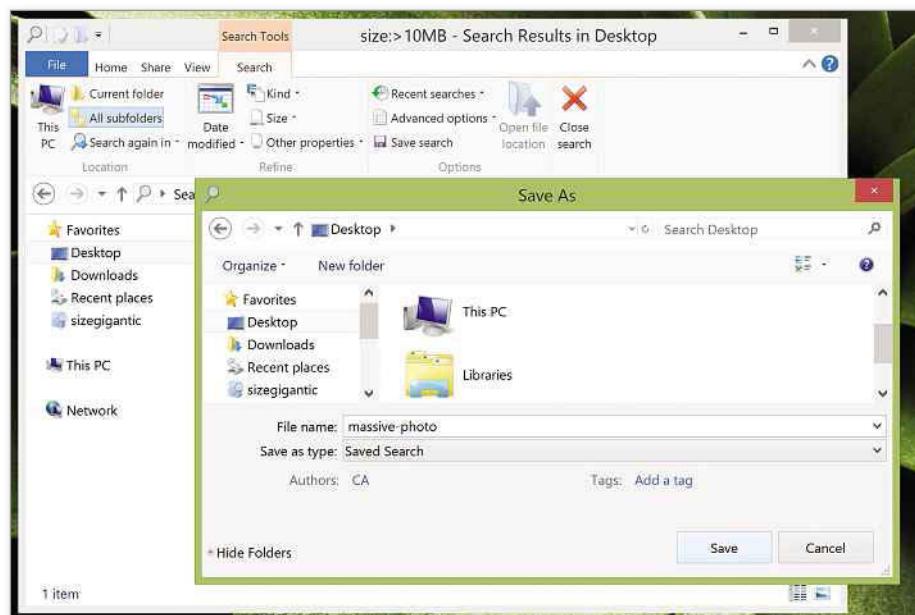
50GB, you really need to continue reading this feature.

Type a series of filters, separated by a space, to streamline the search even further. To see huge photo files only, for instance, type `size:gigantic kind:photo`, or to round up those massive videos you transferred to your PC last week, type `size:>1GB kind:video datemodified:last week`.

Microsoft lists many more filters on its website (www.snapca.com/16874); most work

in Windows 8/8.1, despite the reference to Windows 7 in the introduction.

To save the hassle of typing the same filters every time, you can save searches as one-click shortcuts on your Desktop. Run a search, then click 'Save search' (Save Search in Windows 8/8.1), choose a new name for the file if you want (say,



Create a saved search in Explorer so you can find big files quicker next time

'massive photo') and then click Save. Click the saved file to run that search automatically in Explorer. Alternatively, type **massive photo** (or whatever you've called the file) into Start and click it in the list of results to run the search.

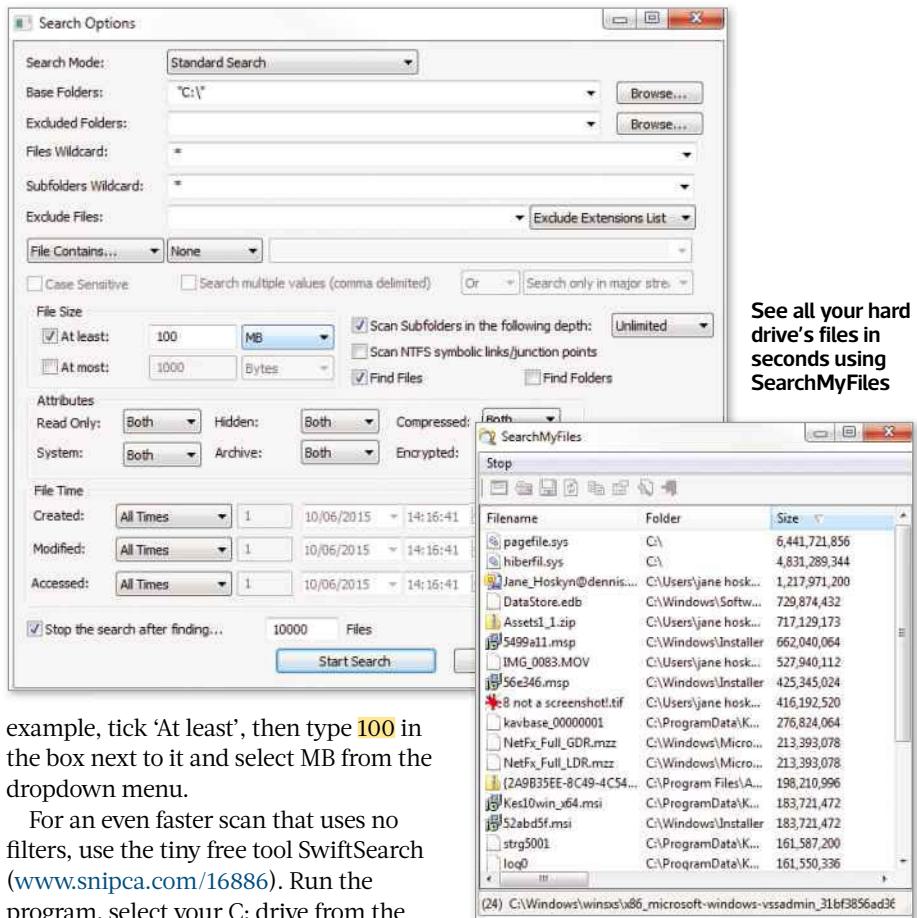
Instantly see your biggest files

Windows Explorer's search tools aren't built for speed. Explorer indexes the contents of files, which is why you can search for words contained in documents – a very useful feature. But indexing really slows down the search, and it's not necessary when hunting down big files. If you asked someone to find the biggest book on your shelves, you wouldn't expect them to sit down and read all your books first.

There are loads of free third-party tools that skip the indexing and go straight for the biggest book on the shelf. The most versatile, and the best alternative to Explorer, is NirSoft's free portable tool **SearchMyFiles** (www.snipca.com/16888).

The program opens in two windows: a Search Options window, where you configure your search, and an empty results window. Click the top-right Browse button in Search Options and navigate to a drive or folder. Because there's no indexing involved, you might as well choose your local drive ('C:\', which is the default). SearchMyFiles only takes a few seconds to search the whole drive and then list its contents in the results window (see both windows in the screenshot above right). Click the Size column heading twice to see the biggest files at the top. To open any item in Windows Explorer, right-click it and click Select File In Explorer.

You can refine the search with filters, too. To find files larger than 100MB, for



example, tick 'At least', then type **100** in the box next to it and select MB from the dropdown menu.

For an even faster scan that uses no filters, use the tiny free tool **SwiftSearch** (www.snipca.com/16886). Run the program, select your C: drive from the dropdown menu, then click Search. The list appears faster than you can sip your tea.

See a map of your PC's space hogs

SpaceSniffer (www.snipca.com/16882) is a treat for tired eyes – which is what you'll have after squinting at all those lists of files. Like the other tools we've mentioned, this free portable program scans your drive and reveals what's taking up most space. Unlike them, it

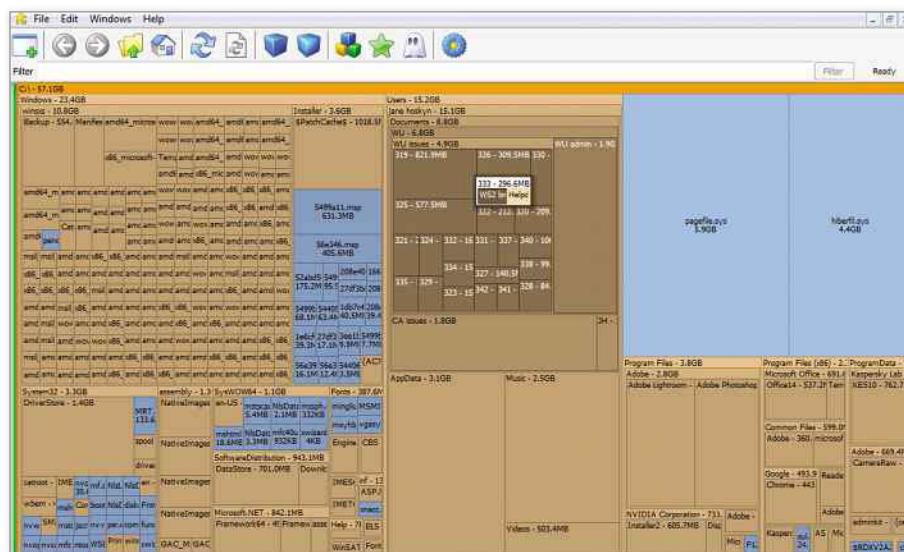
See all your hard drive's files in seconds using **SearchMyFiles**

presents its results visually, so you can actually *see* your biggest files.

When you run the program it'll ask you to 'Choose your Space'. Click '(C:)' to select your local hard drive, or select another connected drive (such as an external drive, **partition**, networked drive or even a DVD). To choose a folder instead, click Path. Then click Start, and your screen will turn into a gently shifting sea of blue and brown rectangles.

Big rectangles represent big files (blue) and folders (brown), and small rectangles represent... you guessed it... small files and folders, all growing and shrinking in real time to reflect real-time changes on your PC. When you first open the map it takes a minute or two to settle down while it scans all your files and folders. But even when it's fully loaded it never quite stops moving, because some files and folders constantly change size – a gentle reminder that your PC is a hive of background activity.

Right-click a blue rectangle for a list of options. System files don't have many right-click options, but photos and documents have plenty, including 'Open with', Properties and Delete. Click a brown rectangle to see the folder's contents, all represented by even smaller rectangles.



See big files and folders as large rectangles using **SpaceSniffer**



Delete all junk files

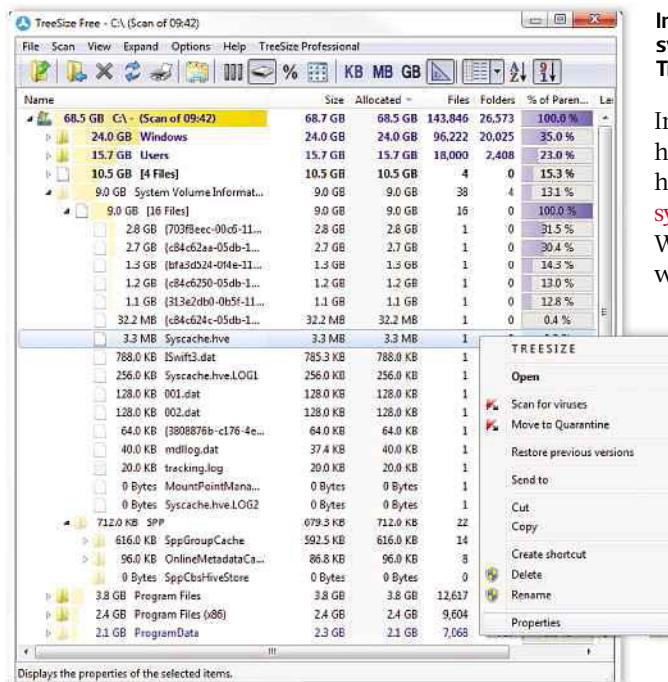
SpaceSniffer works on all versions of Windows right back to 2000, so keep a copy on a USB stick to see what's clogging up your old PCs.

Root out Microsoft's hidden junk

Our SpaceSniffer map on page 52 is dominated by two blue rectangles: 'Pagefile.sys' (clocking in at 5.9GB) and 'Hiberfil.sys' (a mere 4.4GB). Who put them there? The clue is in the filenames, which are straight out of the Microsoft jargon factory. Microsoft dumped these files in our hard drive (and yours), then hid them in Explorer so we couldn't meddle with them.

We might forgive this if the files were vital for our PC or operating system (OS), but they're not. They are potentially useful (see box below), but so are thousands of free third-party tools that wouldn't dream of sneaking 5GB of invisible files into your PC. When a tool does that, we usually call it malware.

Pagefile.sys (Page File) and Hiberfil.sys (Hibernation File) aren't malware, but



they clog up loads of space without asking you first. They're not even the biggest piece of Microsoft junk in your PC. On page 65, *Computeractive* reader Mike French asks our Problems Solved team why a folder called System Volume

Investigate your PC's bloated system files and folders using TreeSize Free

Information (see box below) has devoured half of his 300GB hard drive. This folder contains system restore points that Windows creates regularly, without deleting previous ones.

One or two restore points can save your PC in a crisis, but you will never, ever need 150GB of them.

To see how bloated your System Volume Information folder has become, download the portable (ZIP) version of TreeSize Free (www.snipca.com/16898) and run it as administrator. Click Scan menu, then

'Local Disk (C:)' to load a bar chart-style list of folders with the biggest (normally Windows) at the top. System Volume Information won't be far behind. Click the little triangle next to any folder's name to see the files inside and how much space they're taking up.

THIS MICROSOFT JUNK IS CHOKING YOUR PC

These files and folders are taking up far more space than they're worth...

SYSTEM VOLUME INFORMATION

What is it? This hidden folder contains your PC's system restore data, including restore points.

How big is it? About 10GB if your PC is new or recently wiped, but it can grow to 200GB or more as new restore points are saved and old ones aren't deleted.

Can I delete it? You can, by right-clicking it in TreeSize Free and clicking Delete, but you shouldn't. Some of the files in System Volume Information are needed by your OS. However, you can and should delete old restore points, which are no longer useful and can take up several gigabytes each.

HIBERNATION FILE (HIBERFIL.SYS)

What is it? This file stores data about your PC's current state, so you can go straight back to that state after using Hibernate mode.

How big is it? Around 5-10GB.

Can I delete it? Yes, but disable hibernation first. Microsoft's website explains how to do this, in all versions of Windows (www.snipca.com/16904).

www.snipca.com/16906). You can then delete the file from the right-click menu in a program that lets you view it, such as SpaceSniffer.

PAGE FILE (PAGEFILE.SYS)

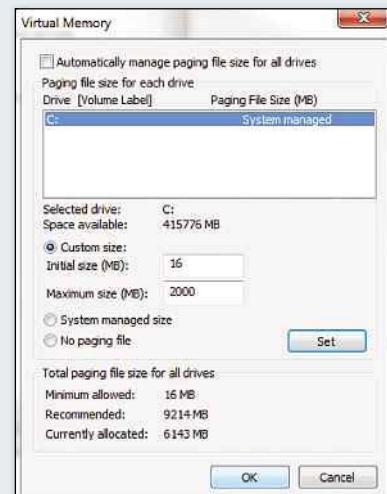
What is it? Virtual memory. Windows uses virtual memory to keep all your processes running if your installed memory (RAM) isn't enough.

How big is it? Normally about 5GB; may be 20GB or more.

Can I delete it? Yes, but your PC would crash more often. Instead, limit the amount of space virtual memory can use. Click System in the Control Panel, then Advanced System Settings on the left, then the Settings button under Performance. Click the Advanced tab, then 'Change...', untick 'Automatically manage...' and then click the little 'Custom size' button. Type 16 in the 'Initial size' box (this is the bare minimum) and 2000 in 'Maximum size' (see screenshot, right). That limits virtual memory to 2GB, which is big enough to keep your PC running and small enough not to overwhelm your hard drive.

OUTLOOK DATA

What is it? All your emails, calendars,



contacts and other Outlook data, backed up into two files (Outlook.pst and Outlook.ost). Here's where to find them, depending on your version of Windows: www.snipca.com/16903.

How big is it? Up to about 50GB.

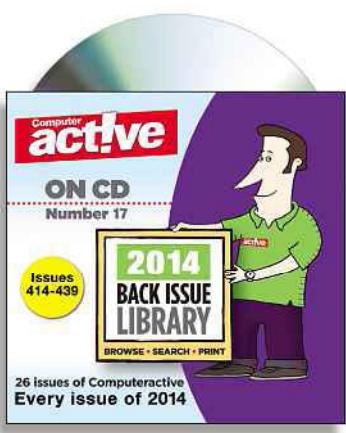
Can I delete it? If you don't use Outlook, certainly – but the files won't be very big. If you do use Outlook, shrink your data files rather than deleting them. Microsoft explains how to do this in different versions (www.snipca.com/16904).

Got too many issues cluttering up your home?



Save space by buying our 2014 Back Issue CD (£15).

All 26 issues from last year
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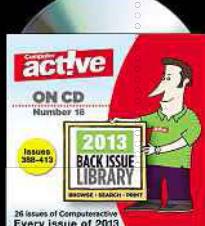


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on Amazon at [www.
snipca.com/16010](http://www.snipca.com/16010),
or by searching for
computeractive cd



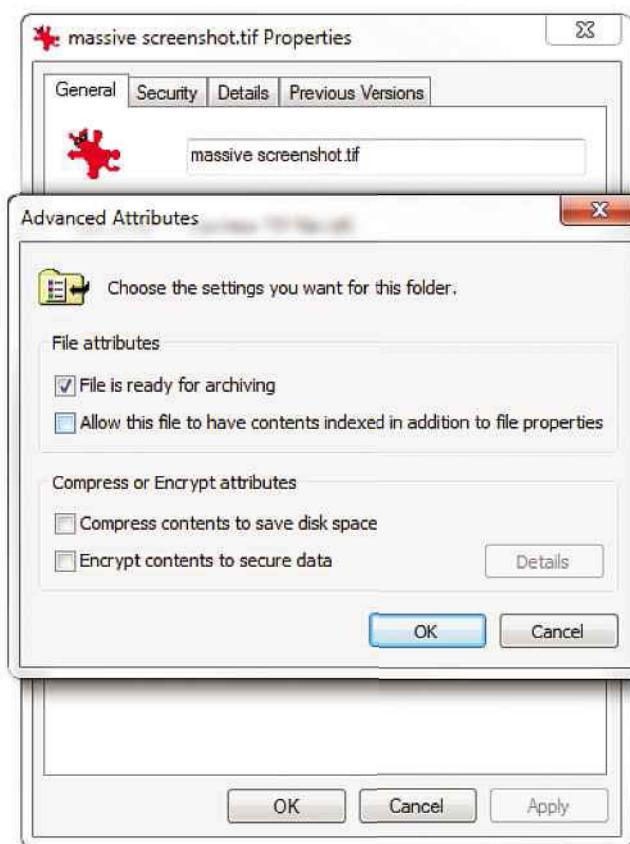
REMOVE SPACE-HOGGING JUNK COMPLETELY

Delete big files and folders faster

Once you've rounded up your PC's junk giants, all you have to do is delete them – right? Simply right-click them, click Delete and empty the Recycle Bin, then restart your PC to bask in your newly spacious hard drive.

In practice, however, deleting massive files and folders is a massive pain. You get as far as clicking Delete, then find yourself staring at a 'Preparing to delete' message all afternoon.

Windows is terrible at deleting big files and folders unless you tinker with its settings. It's another side-effect of indexing: Windows won't send a file to the Recycle Bin until it has indexed every last shred of the file's data (metadata, preferences, security settings and so on). The bigger a file is, the more data there is to index; the bigger a folder, the more files have to be indexed. This can easily take hours.



Switch off indexing to remove a large file or folder much faster

SHRINK TO FIT

Not all massive files deserve to be deleted. Huge photo and video files, for example, can take up an enormous amount of hard-drive space – but that doesn't mean you should destroy them.

One solution is to compress them so they take up less space. There are plenty of free third-party programs that do this more efficiently than Windows' built-in compression tools. Our favourite is free **open-source** tool 7-Zip (www.snipca.com/16925), which lets you compress ('archive') files from the right-click menu, then open files you've compressed.

Alternatively, divide massive files into smaller parts using the free portable tool HJ-Split (www.snipca.com/16926). When you need to use the file, HJ-Split can put it back together again.

Compressing and splitting files can degrade their quality, so the best solution for big files is simply to move them to an external drive or, at the very least, to a partition away from your installed programs and OS. See Issue 451's Cover Feature for more on partitions.

You can switch off indexing, but there's no one-click option for doing this. Instead, you have to disable indexing for individual files and folders. To do this for a file, right-click it, click Properties, then Advanced, and then untick 'Allow this file to have contents indexed in addition to file properties'. Click the OK buttons to apply the change, then try to delete the file again. It should go to the Recycle Bin much faster than before, and the Recycle Bin will empty faster, too.

The process is similar for folders. Right-click a folder, open Properties and click Advanced, then untick 'Allow files in this folder to have contents indexed in addition to file properties'. The change

may take several minutes or even an hour to apply, depending on the size and number of files in the folder, but once that's done the folder will delete much more quickly. You may still see a 'Calculating size' and/or 'Preparing to delete' message while Windows is messing about in the background, but it'll last a few minutes rather than several hours.

Quick trick: you can disable indexing in loads of files at once by moving them into one folder, then switching off indexing for that folder.

Remove stubborn folders using the Command Prompt

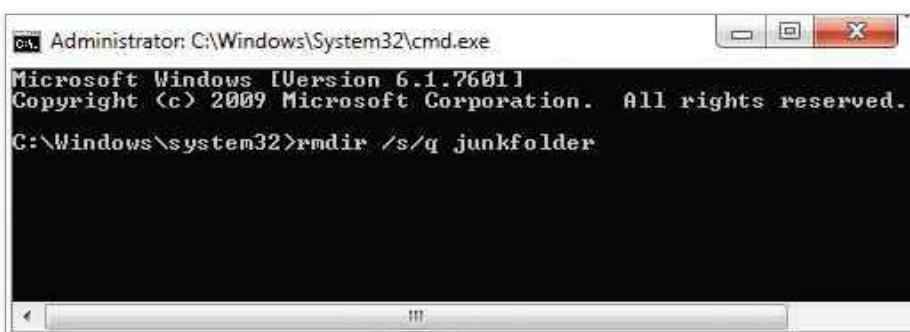
If Windows can't delete a folder even after you've switched off indexing, try deleting it from the Command Prompt. Type **cmd** into Start, right-click 'cmd.exe' at the top of the results list and then click 'Run as administrator'. Don't skip this step: the Command Prompt is much more powerful in administrator mode.

The basic command for deleting a folder is **rmdir /s foldername** (change 'foldername' to the name of the folder you want to obliterate). Press Enter, then 'Y' when prompted.

If the folder fails to delete or Command Prompt can't find it, see Microsoft's TechNet site for numerous possible reasons and some other commands to try (www.snipca.com/16914).

Delete your overflowing Recycle Bin

Your Recycle Bin is a folder full of stuff you no longer want. If you let that stuff pile up, the bin will very quickly become



Use the Command Prompt to remove big folders fast



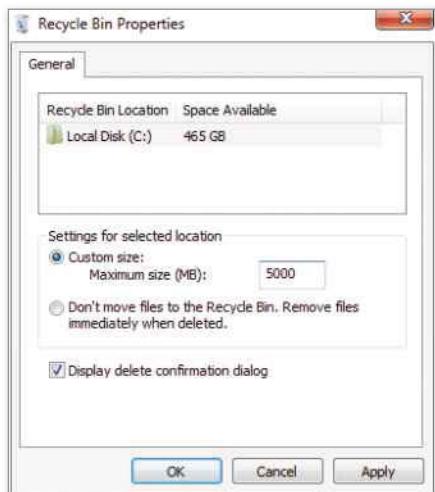
Delete all junk files

the biggest waste of space on your PC. The bigger it gets, the longer it takes to empty – until it even refuses to empty at all.

The quickest way to empty a full Recycle Bin is to delete it. You can do this from the right-click menu in SearchMyFiles or TreeSize Free, or by typing `rd /s %systemdrive%\$Recycle.bin` into the Command Prompt after running it as administrator. Windows automatically creates a new, empty Recycle Bin folder the moment the old, cluttered one is deleted.

To prevent the Recycle Bin overflowing again, set it to empty on an automatic schedule. There's no built-in option to do this, but you can download a simple executable file for emptying the bin (www.snipca.com/16907; click the top link) and then import it into Task Scheduler, which opens when you type `scheduler` into Start and press Enter.

If you want, you can cut out the Recycle Bin and set Windows to blitz items completely when you click Delete. However, we wouldn't recommend it. The Recycle Bin is a useful safety net, and it's no fun trying to recover a file from thin air. Instead of bypassing the bin, limit its size. Right-click it and click Properties, then type **5000** (or lower) in the 'Maximum size' box and click Apply. This limits the space your Recycle Bin can fill



Limit the Recycle Bin's maximum size to prevent it trashing your hard drive



Use FileAssassin to unlock and delete any file, including malware and protected Windows junk

to 5GB, far less than its default maximum size of around 25GB.

it, but it takes up barely any space on your hard drive and there are no unwanted extras in the installer.

Run FileAssassin and click the '...' button to select a locked file (or indeed any file) from your PC, then click Execute to unlock it and force-stop its processes so that you can delete it.

If the file is hidden in Windows Explorer, find it using SearchMyFiles and then drag it from there on to the FileAssassin window. Tick 'Delete file' before you click Execute so that FileAssassin deletes the file after unlocking it.

Remember that not all protected files are locked for annoying or malicious reasons – some are vital PC and program components. Always check what a file is and what it does before you get rid of it, and save a restore point in case things don't go to plan.

Delete locked system junk and malware

Many system files and program files can be removed quickly from the right-click menu in SearchMyFiles, TreeSize Free or whatever program you used to find them on your hard drive – but some can't. These super-stubborn files have been locked by their creator so no-one or nothing can move or remove them. Microsoft does this with some of your system files, and malware creators do it to lock their nefarious wares so that you and your antivirus can't kill them.

To unlock these files, use FileAssassin (www.snipca.com/16915), a tiny, free tool from the makers of Malwarebytes Anti-Malware Free. You have to install

**ON SALE
8 July**

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The definitive guide to the apps you must install on your tablet and phone



Plus

Extensions you must stop using
– and what to use instead

Secret right-click tricks

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Get your PC ready for Windows 10

In the second part of our series, Jonathan Parkyn reveals how to check if your installed programs and peripherals will continue to work in Windows 10

What will work?

When a new operating system (OS) is released, there's no guarantee that programs or device **drivers** written for earlier versions will still work. Going by our experience with the Windows 10 Technical Preview, most software and peripherals that work in Windows 8/8.1 should work fine in the upcoming OS.

If you're running Windows 7, you can get a rough idea of what will or won't work by running the free Windows 8.1 Upgrade Assistant (www.snipca.com/16653). A similar tool exists for XP and Vista users (www.snipca.com/16654), and you can also try the Windows 8.1 Compatibility Center (www.snipca.com/16721).

As far as possible, install the latest driver and program updates before you upgrade Windows, because this will make the whole process smoother. Check the manufacturers' websites to get the most recent updates or use free tools to scan your PC and download the latest updates for you. SlimDrivers Free (www.snipca.com/15419) will update drivers and SUMo (www.snipca.com/16804) will update many popular programs.

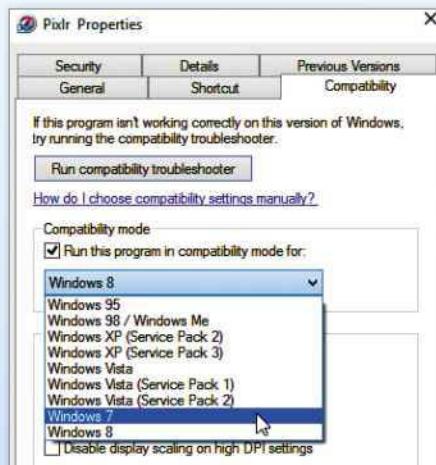
SWITCH TO A FREE ALTERNATIVE

Instead of paying to replace incompatible programs, you could switch to free equivalents. If you've been using an old version of Photoshop, for example, try free photo editor Gimp (www.gimp.org) instead of paying £9 a month for Adobe's new Windows 10-compatible Photoshop subscription (www.snipca.com/16805). Similarly, Microsoft Office 2003 won't work in Windows 10 – but

Run the compatibility troubleshooter

All the most recent versions of Windows – including Windows 10 – come with a very useful compatibility troubleshooter, as well as a series of compatibility modes that can simulate running a program under an older version of the OS.

If, when you upgrade, you discover that certain programs don't work properly, then locate the program's EXE file



Windows 10's compatibility tools can get older programs running in the new OS

instead of paying for Office 365, you could switch to LibreOffice (www.libreoffice.org) or OpenOffice (www.openoffice.org) for free. These programs don't officially support Windows 10 yet, but we've tested them with the Technical Preview and they all install and run without problems. Official support is likely to follow closer to the launch of Windows 10 on 29 July.

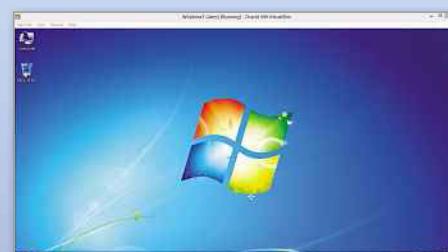


(usually found in C:\Program Files), right-click it and select Properties. Click the Compatibility tab, then click 'Run compatibility troubleshooter' and follow the on-screen instructions. You can also tick the box in the 'Compatibility mode' section and select a version of Windows to run the program under – Windows 7, for example.

Keep your old OS running

If you have an old program or device that won't work with Windows 10, one solution is to continue running an older version of Windows in some shape or form. If you have two PCs, for example, consider upgrading one to Windows 10 first to establish which programs and devices are compatible. If you subsequently discover that some of your favourites don't work, then you could use your second PC to run them.

Alternatively, you could run an older version of Windows within Windows 10 as a virtual 'guest OS', and then run your older software on that. You'll need a virtualisation tool such as VirtualBox (www.virtualbox.org), which is free. You'll also need a copy of the OS you want to install, along with a valid product code. See Fast Fixes for VirtualBox on page 70. 



Run an older version of Windows in VirtualBox to continue using older tools and programs

How your tablet can save your life

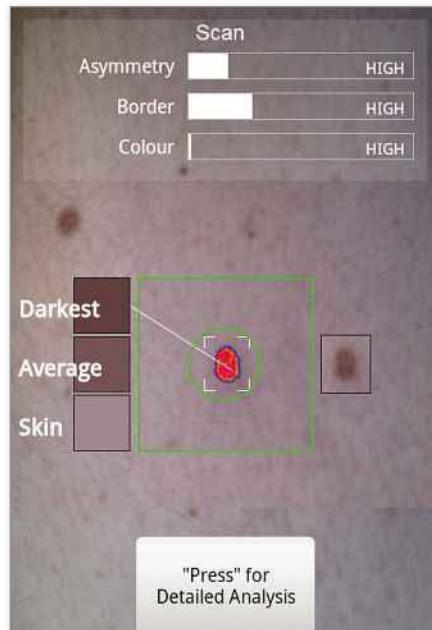
Your tablet and phone can help you investigate symptoms, monitor your fitness and even train your brain. Jonathan Parkyn reveals the health apps that really work

Health trackers and “fitbands” have become big business over the last couple of years. But you don’t necessarily need an overpriced elastic band round your wrist to keep yourself in good nick. There are dozens of brilliant apps that let you monitor, analyse and improve your health using your tablet or phone – and many of the best are completely free.

Unfortunately, there are plenty of poor-quality, misleading health apps on the market, too. So here we’ll direct you to the best ones, so you can be sure of good health advice and steer clear of the virtual quacks.

Check and track your symptoms

No one and nothing can track symptoms of illness as well as your doctor can. However, you can help your doctor make a diagnosis by using an app to monitor and record physical changes, and then



Check skin moles and track any changes using free Android app Doctor Mole

showing the log to your doctor.

For example, to track changes to moles on your skin, use the Doctor Mole app, which is free for Android (www.snipca.com/16774) but costs £3.99 from Apple's app store (www.snipca.com/16810). The best app for monitoring glucose levels is iHealth Gluco-Smart (Android www.snipca.com/16811, iOS www.snipca.com/16775), but while the app itself is free, it only works if you also use the iHealth wireless glucose monitor (£59.99 from www.snipca.com/16776).

To find information on symptoms you might be worried about, use the NHS's 'Health and Symptom checker' app, which is completely free (Android www.snipca.com/16770, iOS www.snipca.com/16769). It can provide an initial assessment, and offer advice based on information about your condition.

Nuffield HealthScore (Android www.snipca.com/16765, iOS www.snipca.com/16766)

HOW YOUR PHONE CAN KEEP YOU HEALTHY

A brisk 20-minute walk every day can add years to your life, according to a medical report published earlier this year (www.snipca.com/16813). The NHS, meanwhile, recommends walking 10,000 steps (about five miles) a day.

There are some great free apps that let you track your walking distance, but they usually don't work on tablets. Therefore you'll need to use your smartphone, which has built-in GPS that apps use to monitor distance. Besides, it's much easier to stick your phone in your pocket and go for a walk than take your tablet along.

For example, Apple's built-in Health app (see screenshot) is limited to iPhones only – you won't find it on your iPad. It's



included with iOS 8, iPhone 5s or later with an M7 motion processor. Tap it then check the Dashboard, and you may even find that it has already been recording your steps. If it hasn't, turn it on by tapping Health Data, then Fitness, then Steps and switching on 'Show on Dashboard'.

If you have an older iPhone or an Android phone, record your steps using the free step-tracking app Moves instead (Android www.snipca.com/16751, iOS www.snipca.com/16752). Android owners should also consider installing the free Google Fit app (www.snipca.com/16750), which includes a step tracker. We'll have a Workshop showing you how to get the best out of Google Fit in the next issue of Computeractive (out Wednesday 8 July).



BRAIN TRAINERS WORTH USING

Keeping your brain in good shape is just as important as exercising your body, and there are loads of apps that claim to help. Unfortunately, a lot of so-called 'brain training' apps are utter rubbish. The best ones tend to work on a 'freemium' basis – you can download them for free and access a small number of daily exercises for free, while other exercises cost money. There are no compulsory in-app purchases.

Our favourite apps of this kind are Elevate (Android www.snipca.com/16759, iOS www.snipca.com/16758) and Lumosity (Android www.snipca.com/16761, iOS www.snipca.com/16760), which both offer fun, personalised mental workouts based on neuroscience and cognitive research to improve your memory, confidence and language skills.



If you want to stick with cost-free apps that keep your grey matter in trim, use one of the many free Sudoku apps for Android (such as www.snipca.com/16763) and iOS (such as www.snipca.com/16823).

www.snipca.com/16764) is a good free all-round health tracker, with an emphasis on fitness. Bear in mind though, the best fitness monitors work on phones rather than tablets, because they harness the device's built-in GPS (see box below left).

Get help in an emergency

The British Red Cross has a very useful free 'First aid' app (Android www.snipca.com/16768, iOS www.snipca.com/16766) that can tell you precisely what to do in an emergency – and possibly even save a life. There's simple step-by-step advice with videos and animations to help you understand what to do in a crisis, along with quizzes to test your first-aid knowledge. All the content is hosted in the app, rather than online, so you can access it offline wherever you are.

The free First Aid Training app (Android only, www.snipca.com/16822) has advice on how to handle certain critical situations. Tap an item – these include Heart Attack, 'To do CPR on Adult' and 'Control a Fall' – for a description and pictures. Like the 'First aid' app, First Aid Training's content is available offline.

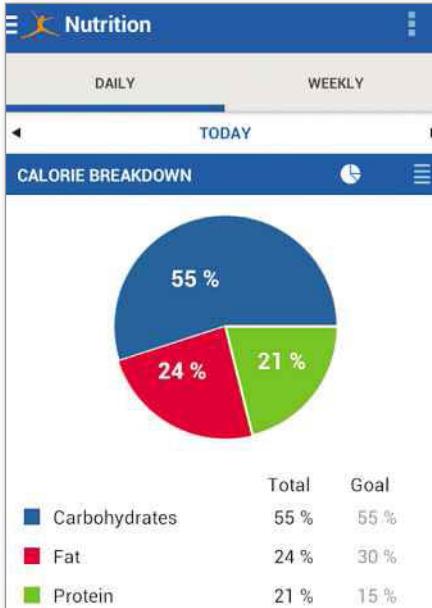
If you have a smartphone, make sure you've got an 'emergency button' app set up to alert a contact of your choice if the worst happens. Free app Panic Button (www.redpanicbutton.com, Android and iOS phones) sends an SMS text message to your chosen contact, along with your exact GPS co-ordinates.

Monitor the food you eat

At one time keeping track of your diet meant jotting everything you ate in a journal or dieting diary. Now you can use

your tablet or phone to record that information. What's more, it will help you calculate the number of calories you've consumed and give you a useful overview of your intake.

There are a number of apps for doing this, but our favourite is 'Calorie Counter & Diet Tracker' by MyFitnessPal (Android www.snipca.com/16754, iOS www.snipca.com/16753). You don't need the new premium version (£7.99 a month) as long as you can put up with adverts on screen. Just sign up for a free account, enter your details, such as age, height, weight and target weight, and the app will calculate a daily calorie target for you. You can also enter the food you've eaten, and the app will use its large database of calorie



Keep track of your calorie intake using MyFitnessPal



Analyse and improve your sleep cycles with free app SleepBot

counts to calculate your total intake.

If you're using it on your phone or you have a compatible Fitbit or Jawbone fitness band, the app can integrate data from your daily steps and work out your calorie deficit.

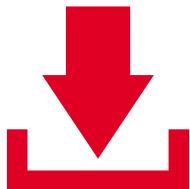
Track your sleep

Apart from making us grumpy and tired, insufficient sleep can have serious implications for our long-term wellbeing. Heart disease, high blood pressure, obesity and diabetes have all been linked to chronic sleep deprivation.

Many fitness bands come with sensors that track your sleep, but you can achieve similar results using a free app called SleepBot (Android www.snipca.com/16756, iOS www.snipca.com/16755). Plug in your tablet or phone (the app works on both) next to your bed, and the app will track your movement and sounds during the night to provide you with information about your sleep cycles. Over time, you can examine your sleep trends, review sleep statistics and set gentle 'smart' alarms to wake you at optimal moments of light sleep.

Other apps can help insomniacs drift off or remain asleep for longer. An iPhone app called Sleepio (www.snipca.com/16757), for example, uses clinically proven cognitive behavioural therapy techniques to 'train' you to overcome poor sleep. Sleepio requires a subscription to use (£7.99 a month), but you can try the free trial to see if it works for you. **ca**

Download newspapers **from the day you were born**



What was making front-page news on the day you came into the world?

Jonathan Parkyn reveals where to find historical headlines and download newspapers to keep

It's now easier than ever to browse and obtain copies of historical newspapers and articles, whether that means getting hold of a real, physical copy or a downloadable one. In addition, there are other archive materials – newsreel videos, comics and more – that you can view or download. In this feature we'll be explaining where to start your research, how much it's likely to cost you and how to get some of it for free.

Download PDFs of papers from the day you were born

Currently, one of the most reliable sources of downloadable newspapers is UKPressOnline (www.ukpressonline.co.uk), which has digitised editions of

several national UK titles, including the *Daily Express* and the *Daily Mirror*.

Public access to some parts of the archive is restricted – for example, anyone can access digital editions of the *Mirror* dating from between 1903 and 1980, but only academic institutions can access issues that go up to present day.

To see what's available on a specific day, type the date (DD/MM/YYYY format) into the search box on the homepage and click Date Search. You'll be greeted by thumbnails representing the pages available for that date (see screenshot below).

To view a larger preview or download a copy to your PC, you'll need to subscribe to the archive. You'll have to pay for a

one- or two-day subscription, but you can download everything you need within that time frame. An all-inclusive 24-hour subscription costs £7.50, while 48-hour access to either the *Mirror* or *Express* archives costs £5.99 each. Click the Shop link for details. To download pages, click the Register link at the top and sign up for an account – this process is free and grants you access to the archives of Victorian regional paper, the *South Eastern Gazette* (www.snipca.com/16818), for nothing.

Now go back to the shop and select the subscription you want. At the checkout you'll be prompted to pay with PayPal. You don't actually need a PayPal account for this – instead you can click

the 'Pay with debit or credit card' option on the PayPal page and enter your card details.

Once you've paid, go back to the UKPressOnline page and, making sure you're still signed in, carry out your date search again. This time, you'll be able to click the Save PDF icon under each page you want and download a digital copy to your PC. Be warned that the quality of some of the scans is a little low. You'll need a PDF reader, such as Adobe Reader (free from www.snipca.com/16794), installed on your PC to view the files.

Search for and download scanned copies of newspapers at [UKPressOnline](#)

Download other newspapers for free

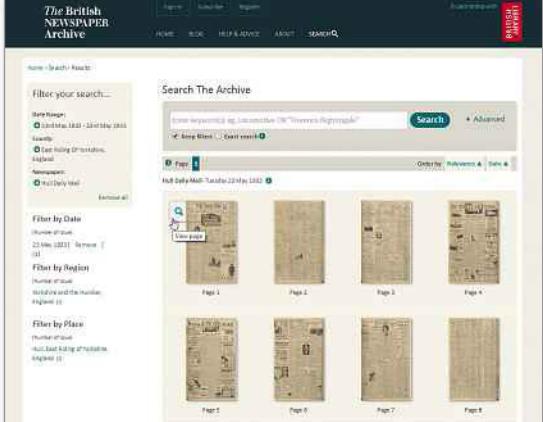
The British Newspaper Archive (www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk) has set itself the admirable (and unenviable) task of digitising a staggering 40 million newspaper pages from the British Library's vast collection over the next decade. There are already hundreds of millions of articles online, all searchable by keyword.

The site specialises in regional press dating from the early 1700s to mid-20th Century, though nationals, such as the *Daily Telegraph*, are gradually being added too. You can narrow your research to a specific title or county, as well as search by date.

As with UKPressOnline, you need to register and pay for a subscription before you can download anything. The cheapest package costs £9.95 (www.snipca.com/16820), which grants you a month's access. Currently, this collection is a little hit and miss, so before you cough up any cash we definitely recommend clicking the Advanced Search button and searching the archive to see whether there's anything relevant on your specific date or dates.

Some of the larger collections of newspapers are restricted to academic use, including Gale News Vault (www.snipca.com/16800), which contains digitised editions of *The Times*, *Daily Mail*, *Independent* and satirical magazine *Punch*, which closed in 2002. If you have access to a university or library that subscribes to the Gale News Vault, you may be able to view some online content, but access is not permitted on an individual basis.

Other online archives are more freely available. Welsh Newspapers Online (www.snipca.com/16821), for example, has a searchable archive of 7.6 million articles published in a variety of Welsh



The British Newspaper Archive's online collection of downloadable pages is growing

 Download newspapers from the day you were born

GIVE A HISTORICAL GIFT

Downloading and viewing old newspapers online is great, but if you're looking for a gift, then a scruffy A4 inkjet printout is unlikely to cut it. Instead, you could consider ordering a physical copy of a newspaper from the date in question from the web.

One of the most popular sites offering such a service is Historic Newspapers (www.historic-newspapers.co.uk), which claims to be one of the largest private collections of original British newspapers in the world and at any given time holds around 7 million original editions dating from 1900 to the present day. Head to the site and choose your date from the dropdown menus on the homepage to see what's available.

Because all the archive's newspapers are genuine originals rather than copies, you're not necessarily guaranteed to find anything on your chosen date. But in most cases you should find a wide variety of



national papers to choose from, including the *Guardian*, *Times*, *Daily Express* and the *London Evening Standard*. Prices start at around £25 per copy, though there's a surcharge for rarer editions, including some Sunday papers. Should you wish, you can add a number of gift options – boxes, folders or frames – and a personalised certificate to your order.

papers between 1804 and 1919. You can't currently download PDFs (this feature is due to be added at some point), but you can search by date and take a screenshot of anything you want to save. The simplest way to take a screenshot is to press PrtScn on your keyboard, open an image editor such as Paint, and then press Ctrl+V to paste the screenshot into it.

For something a bit different, browse the collection of downloadable historic comic books found at the Digital Comic Museum (<http://digitalcomicmuseum.com>). The archive is a little chaotically ordered and most of the content is from the US rather than the UK, but all public-domain comics are free to download once you've registered with the site.

Download newsreels from the day you were born

It's not just newspapers that can help you mark a moment in time. Other archive materials, including video, can bring the past to life even more effectively.

The web hosts a number of burgeoning video archives that let you view and, in some cases, download clips, newsreels or entire programmes from the era



Watch or download historical clips at British Pathé's online archive

in question. Head to the British Pathé site (www.britishpathé.com) for a brilliant selection of 90,000 clips, including news articles, football matches and more, spanning the best part of the 20th Century. Use the Advanced Search option to narrow your search by date (the day or year you were born, for example). Pathé clips are free to watch online, but if you want a copy to download and keep, you'll need to pay around £30.

The BBC Archive (www.snipca.com/16802) has a handful of interesting historical collections worth browsing, too. Also try the Internet Archive's library of royalty-free clips (<https://archive.org/movies>), and you can always search YouTube for your birth year to see what comes up. 

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Problems Solved

PROBLEM OF THE FORTNIGHT

Why won't my digibox loop through when in standby?

Q I recently bought a Humax HDR-2000T hard drive-based personal video recorder. I've set it up but found that the **RF loop-through** doesn't work when the machine is in standby, though it works fine when switched on. In my experience, this is unusual behaviour for these types of digital boxes. Do you think this is a fault, or is it the way it's designed to be used? It's only a minor irritation that can be overcome by not using standby, but I use the RF loop-through to carry the incoming aerial feed to other equipment.

Victor Attwood

A This isn't a fault but a design decision that Humax's engineers evidently decided was a bad one, because the company has recently issued a software update for this box that eradicates the problem.

Humax does from time to time issue these software changes 'over the air' (OTA), meaning that you just need to leave your box plugged in and switched on and it will eventually receive an OTA update. However, if you want to fix it right away you can do the job yourself, if you have a USB stick.

To work with your Humax box your stick will need to be formatted to **FAT32**, so insert it into your PC, right-click it in Windows Explorer (Windows key+E), then choose Format followed by FAT32 from the 'File system' dropdown menu, and click Start.

Next, visit www.snipca.com/16288 and download the latest version of the



Download the latest software update for the Humax HDR-2000T to ensure RF loop-through works properly

HDR-2000T **firmware**. This comes as a compressed zip file, which you'll need to expand in your USB stick by right-clicking the file and choosing Extract All. You need to expand it into the USB stick's root (or parent) folder, meaning the files must not be expanded into a folder of their own.

Now switch off your HDR-2000T box and insert your USB stick. Next, turn on your TV and prepare for some nimble fingerwork: switch on your box and repeatedly tap the down button on the front panel. Your HDR-2000T should recognise the presence of the update file and go through an automated process – there's nothing for you to do but twiddle your thumbs for a few minutes. Note, it's important not to interrupt the process in any way, so don't be tempted to switch the power off – even if it seems to be taking a long time. When it's finished the message 'Download Successful' will appear on your TV screen. It's now safe to remove the USB stick. Press the standby button to finish.

Finally, switch your HDR-2000T back on and, using the remote control, bring up the on-screen menu then navigate to Settings followed by Power Management. And set the Power Saving Mode option to its Off position – this is a necessary step if you want the RF loop-through to remain active when your box enters standby mode.



Can I remove Office from my tablet?

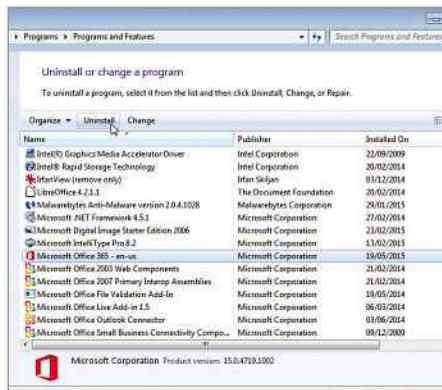
Q I have a Toshiba Encore 2 tablet running Windows 8.1. It came with a free subscription for Office 365, which I can run on one tablet and on a PC. No problems there, until I installed it on my tablet and watched it take up a huge chunk of the **SSD** storage. While I do use Office, I really only need Outlook on the tablet. Is there any way I can just use Outlook online on my tablet, and in the process reclaim all the storage space on the SSD?

Duncan Bird

A Yes, you can do this. While your device is indeed considered a tablet for the purposes of your Microsoft Office licence, it actually runs the full version of Windows 8.1 – and that means adding or removing applications is no different than when using a desktop PC.

Office 365 for Windows 8.1 is installed as Desktop applications, so it needs to be uninstalled via Control Panel. In the Start screen tap the Desktop tile then long-press the Start button and tap Control Panel. Now tap 'Uninstall a program' under Programs, then tap to select Microsoft Office 365 and tap Uninstall – and then follow the prompts to remove it.

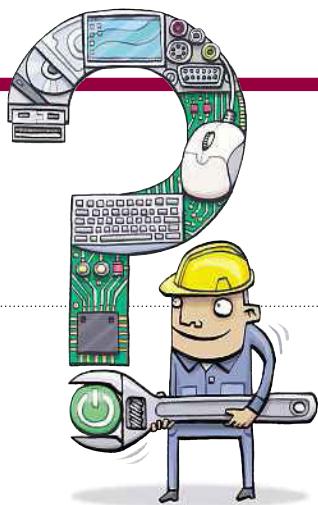
To access Outlook online via your tablet, launch Internet Explorer (or any other browser) then visit www.outlook.com and log in with your Microsoft account details.



Remove Office 365 on a Windows 8.1 tablet via the Control Panel

Our experts solve all your tech problems

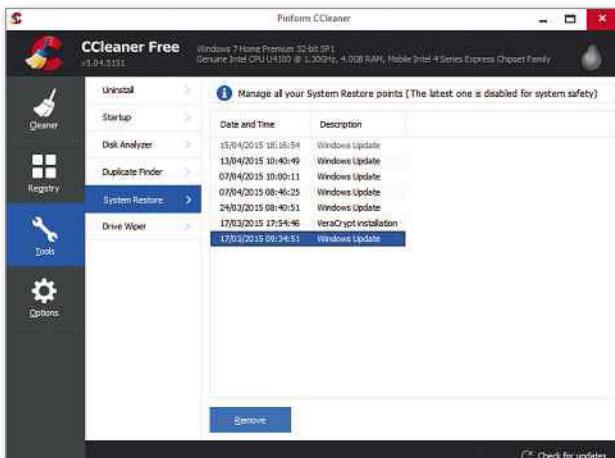
✉ Email us your problem and we'll try to help: noproblem@computeractive.co.uk



Is it safe to delete System Volume Information files?

Q I have used CCleaner to scan my C: drive, which shows just 16GB free of the 300GB capacity. According to CCleaner, my programs and personal files and folders take up about 117GB, with 167GB shown as 'System Volume Information' files. The first of these is 8GB, and then there are various smaller ones. I can't find these files using Windows and yet in total they seem to take up more than my own files! What's going on and how do I delete these files to recover the space?

Mike French



Use CCleaner to delete System Restore Points and free up space on your hard drive

A These files relate to the Restore Points created automatically by Windows, following whatever settings you have configured for this feature. They're stored in a folder called 'System Volume Information' but this is hidden by default, as it's really not a good idea to go poking around inside – and that's why you can't find it using Windows Explorer.

If you're really curious, then you can reveal it (and other hidden system folders) from within Windows Explorer. First, press Alt to reveal the menu bar, then click Tools followed by 'Folder options'. Now select the View tab and, in the 'Advanced settings' list below, select the 'Show hidden files, folders and drives' button and clear the tick from the 'Hide protected operating system files

(Recommended)' box. Click OK.

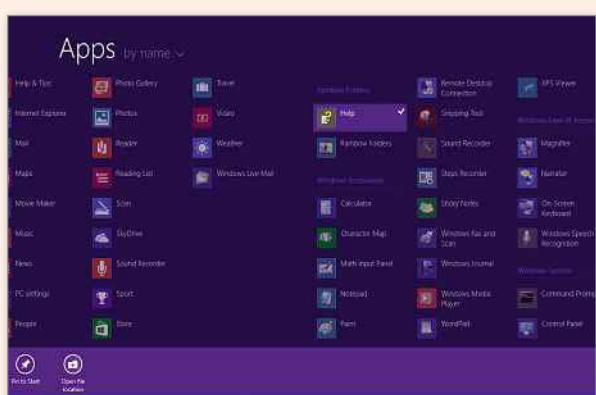
But, as we said, you don't want to do anything manually with these files. Instead, delete the Restore Points or adjust the relevant Windows settings to limit the space they can occupy. You can do the former in CCleaner by clicking the Tools tab, then System Restore. Now click the Restore Points you no longer want (see screenshot), then Remove followed by OK. You can't delete the most recent Restore Point, incidentally.

Alternatively (or as well), you can tweak how System Restore works. Click Start then Control Panel, then 'System and Security' followed by Security. Click 'System protection' and then choose the System Protection tab. Choose the C: drive in Protection Settings, then click the Configure button. Move the 'Max usage' slider to the left to limit the space used. You can also click Delete here to erase all Restore Points. Click OK.

How do I clear out Windows 8.1's Apps screen?

Q I've just bought a new Windows 8.1 laptop. After reading a guide in Computeractive, I set about removing all the junk that came pre-installed. My Start screen now looks great, but the Apps page is cluttered, even after just a week of installing my favourite programs. My problem is with the inclusion of numerous 'read me' files, and uninstall and help icons that come with the main software. With Windows 7 and XP you could create shortcuts to the main software on the Desktop, and all the junk was hidden away in the Start menu. I want an Apps screen with only the stuff I actually use – so is there a way to hide all the junk?

Lewis Mortimer



Clear unwanted junk from your Windows 8 Apps screen by deleting it from their installation folders

A The only way to remove items from the Apps screen is to move or delete them from the relevant installation folders. This is fine

for shortcuts and unwanted readme.txt files, for example, but you should avoid deleting executable files with a .exe file extension (uninstaller tools could have these, for example).

From the Apps screen, right-click an unwanted item then click 'Open file location'. This will launch File Explorer (the new name for Windows Explorer) with the selected item highlighted. If it's a shortcut (indicated by a little arrow on the icon), it's safe to move or delete. If not, leave it alone – unless you're certain the file is not required.

Problems Solved

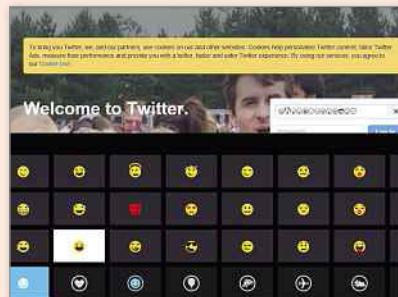
How do I type emojis in Windows?

Q I use Twitter on my smartphone and tablet and sometimes like to insert emojis into my updates. I'd like to do the same when I use Twitter on my PC. Can you help?

Ron Hemes

A If your PC runs Windows 8/8.1 then you can make use of a feature called Touch Keyboard, which mimics the on-screen keyboards displayed by tablets and smartphones. First, if it's not already enabled, click the Desktop tile then right-click the Taskbar and point your cursor to Toolbars, then click Touch Keyboard. Click the Touch Keyboard icon in the Taskbar, then click (or tap, if you have a touchscreen monitor) or tap the emoji icon at the bottom, to the left of the space bar. Next, click or tap the desired emoji and it'll be passed to the current application window, such as Internet Explorer logged on to Twitter.

For Windows 7 or earlier, you'll need to copy and paste emojis from elsewhere, such as <http://classic.getemoji.com> – a great free online resource (you can find the full set of modern emoji at <http://getemoji.com>, but not all will work with Windows 7 without adding extra fonts). Click and drag with your mouse to select the desired emoji then copy it by pressing Control (Ctrl)+C. Now switch to Twitter and paste using Control+V.



Use Touch Keyboard in Windows 8/8.1 to add emojis to your Twitter updates

Why does my mouse scroll wheel stop working?

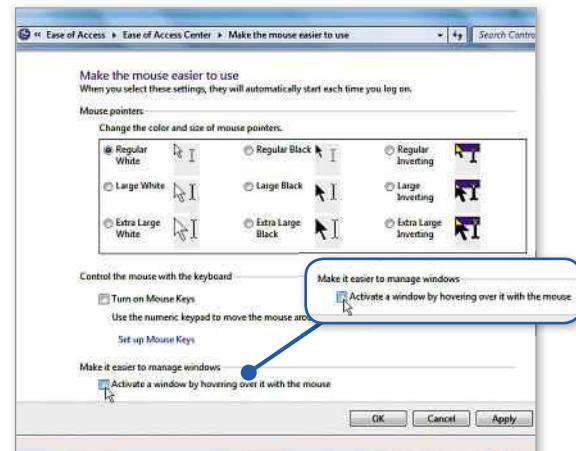
Q When using my mouse's wheel the ability to scroll will suddenly stop. I have to left-click the browser window to activate scrolling again. This also occurs when I am typing, so I have to left-click to activate the page. My PC runs Windows 7.

Roy Saxton

A It sounds like your current application window is losing 'focus' (meaning a window other than the one you're working on becomes active). This can happen in a variety of ways, such as some background tool stealing focus for whatever reason.

Try dragging your cursor beyond the boundaries of the application window, to see if you lose focus. If that happens, click Start followed by Control Panel and then 'Ease of Access' followed by 'Change how your mouse works': if there's a tick in the 'Activate a window by hovering over it with the mouse' box, clear it and click OK (see screenshot above).

If moving your cursor doesn't lose focus, try disabling programs that launch



If your mouse's scroll wheel stops working occasionally make this tweak via Control Panel

with Windows. Click Start, type `msconfig` into the search bar and press Enter. In the System Configuration dialogue box, click Startup. Disable the first item then restart your PC to see if the problem is fixed. If this doesn't fix things, return to System Configuration, re-enable the first item and disable the second. Repeat until you find the culprit, then look in that application's settings to see if there's an option to stop it stealing focus.

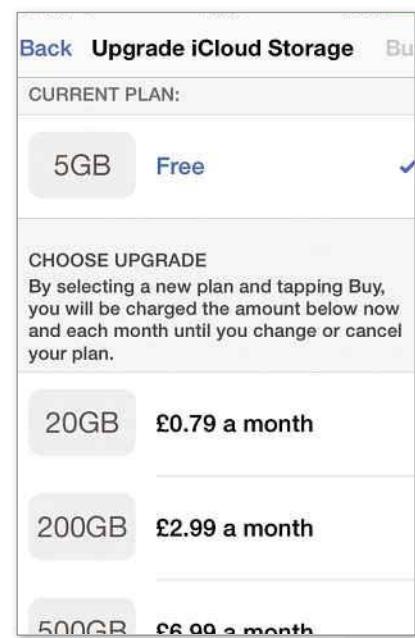
Should I have more free iCloud storage?

Q I'm receiving messages on my iPad saying I'm running out of cloud storage (I have 5GB allocated). This leads me to two questions. Don't I get 5GB with each Apple device I own? And can I make a one-off payment to buy more storage rather than having to pay a monthly fee?

Mike Phillips

A You get 5GB of free storage for signing up to the iCloud service, not for each Apple device you register.

As for one-off payments for more storage, that's not an option. Apple used to offer annual plans but ditched them last year. Customers who signed up for annual iCloud plans before 10 September, 2014, get to keep them, and can continue to stump up just once a year. But for all new subscriptions – or for existing subscribers wanting to change plans – the only options are monthly charges. These start at 79p/month for 20GB up to £14.99 for 1TB. See more info at www.snipca.com/16289.



Increase your iCloud storage capacity with monthly payment plans

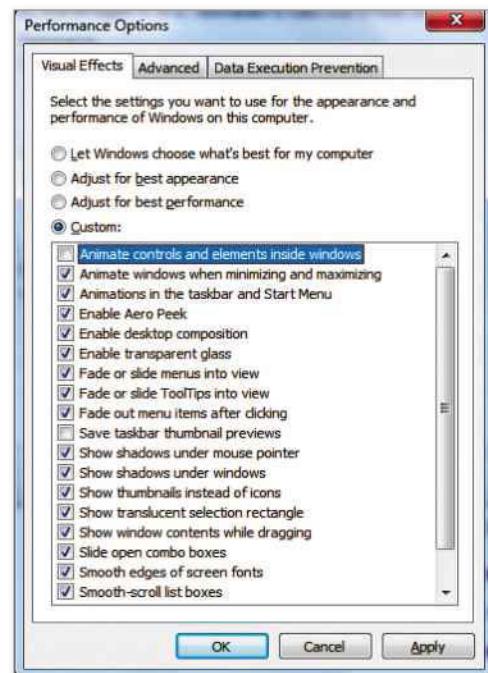
How I do I stop smooth scrolling in Word 2013?

Q For a while now I've been using LibreOffice Writer on my Windows 7 PC, as recommended by *Computeractive* in the past. I recently received a free subscription to Office 365 with an HP tablet that I bought, so I thought I'd try Word 2013 (not having used it since the 2003 edition). A lot has changed and I'm still finding my way around, but one thing I'm finding really distracting is that scrolling is 'smooth', rather than moving in line blocks as LibreOffice does – and I'm sure Word 2003 did too. I'm sure Microsoft considers this an improvement but I don't. Is there any way to make Word 2013 scroll instantly, rather than smoothly?

Pat White

A Yes, there are two places to go to fix this. Start with Word. Click File followed by Options, then click Advanced, scroll down to the General section and clear the tick from 'Provide feedback with animation'. Click OK.

If this doesn't work with your setup then you'll need to disable smooth scrolling at the operating system level. Click Start, Control Panel, then 'System and Security' followed by System, and then 'Advanced system settings'. Select the Advanced tab, then click the Settings button in the Performance area. Now click the Visual Effects tab and untick 'Animate controls and elements inside windows' (see screenshot). Click OK twice.



Turn off your operating system's smooth-scrolling feature in your Visual Effects settings

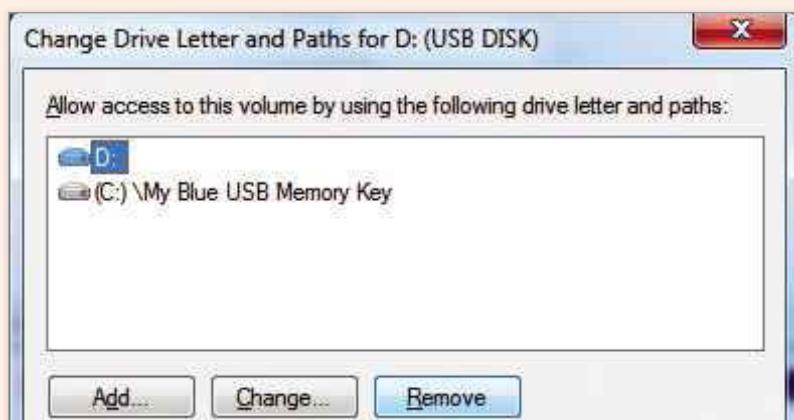
What happens when Windows runs out of drive letters?

Q I've built up a large collection of external hard drives and printers, each with a number of memory slots for various memory cards. With all these devices connected I've effectively run out of drive letters, with my accessible drives now labelled all the way up to Z:. So, what happens when I want to add another drive? Online answers seem sketchy, with some people suggesting that Windows assigns letters such as AA: and so on, but I'm not convinced. I think it makes more sense to mount the drive to a chosen location. Is this correct? If so, how is it done?

Martin Johnson

A Yes, you're correct – mounting additional drives as folders is the way forward. In fact, you can do this before you run out of drive letters, which is useful if you wish to retain letters for certain drives, say.

In Windows 7, click Start, then right-click Computer and choose Manage. In the left-hand pane, double-click Storage, and then click Disk Management. Next, in one of the two middle panes, right-click a drive and choose 'Change Drive Letter and Paths' to bring up a new dialogue box



(see top screenshot). Next, click the Add button, select 'Mount in the following empty NTFS folder' (see bottom screenshot), then click Browse and choose an existing (or create a new) folder on an existing drive (such as C:).

Click OK once (or twice if you created a

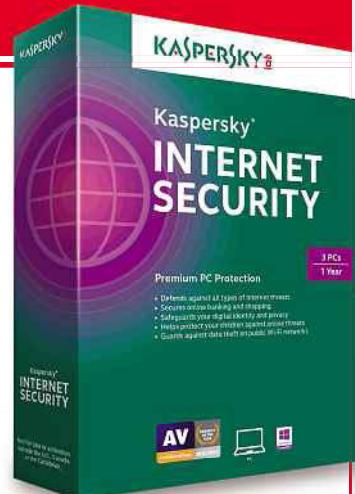
new folder) and you'll be able to access the drive via the chosen folder. You can now also free up the drive letter.

In the 'Change Drive Letter and Paths' dialogue box, click the drive letter then click Remove. Click Yes to acknowledge the warning that any programs reliant on this drive letter may no longer work.

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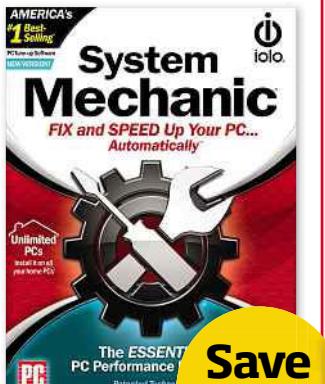
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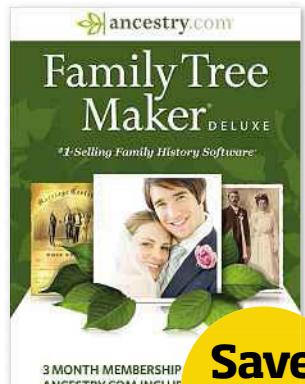
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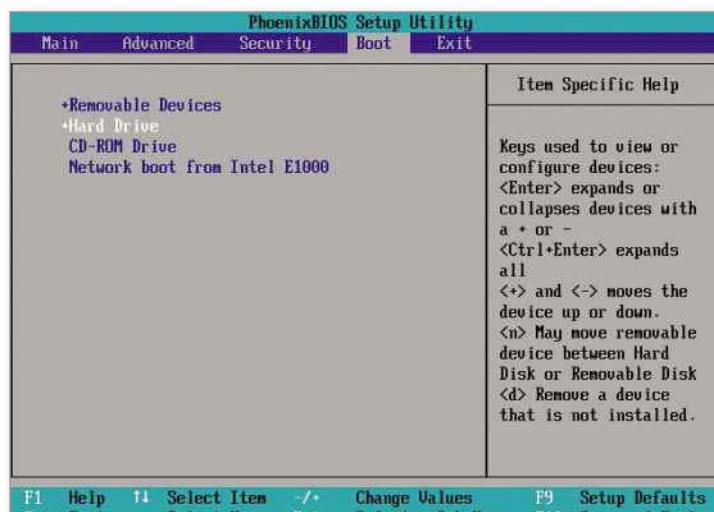
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How do I set my new drive as drive C:?

Q I am planning to install Windows 7 on a new hard drive, as well as adding more memory to my PC. As I'd like to wipe the old drive to reuse in this new setup, how do I go about giving the new drive the label C:, as this is currently used by the existing drive? I have already backed up everything, so I'm all ready to start – but I don't know how to proceed. Should I rename the old drive and then format it before installing the new one?

Gail Ralph



If you install a new hard drive to use for your main operating system, you'll need to change the boot order of drives in your BIOS

A The trick here is to change the boot order of the drives in your PC's BIOS so that your new drive is higher in the list than the old one. When you do this, your PC will fail to boot because the new drive is empty –

but you'll fix that by installing Windows 7. Then, once Windows 7 is up and running on the new drive – which will automatically become drive C: in this sequence – you'll be able to format your old drive.

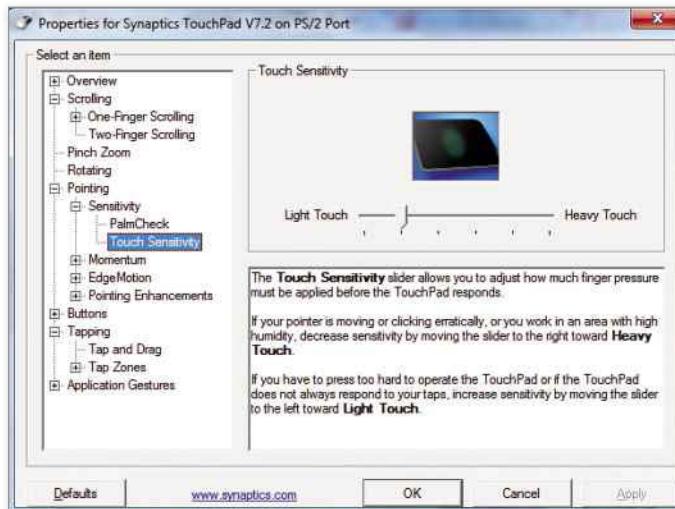
The method of accessing a PC's BIOS changes but typically it involves tapping a key such as Delete (Del), F2 or F12 soon after switching on: look for a message telling you which button to press. Use the cursor (arrow) keys and Enter to navigate through the BIOS to find a menu or option called something like 'Boot Order' or 'Boot Sequence', then move the new drive to the top of the list (or at least above the old hard drive – you might want to keep a CD or DVD drive at the top, for example).

Now install Windows 7 in the normal way and, when it's done, allow Windows to start and then launch Windows Explorer (Windows key+E). Right-click the old drive (probably labelled D:), choose Format then follow the prompts to complete the erasure.

Is it possible to disable my laptop's touchpad?

Q I have a three-year-old Windows 7 laptop, which I operate using a wireless mouse that connects via a small USB dongle. I'm not a touch-typist so spend at least half the time looking at my keyboard. I often find that one of my fingers has brushed the touchpad in front of the keyboard, causing the cursor to jump away from where I want it. I have tried to find a way to disable the touchpad, but have failed. Can you tell me if this is possible?

Harry Hayes



You can tweak your touchpad's sensitivity in the Mouse Properties dialogue box

A Yes, this should be possible, but the option you need is almost certainly grouped together with the mouse settings, which might explain why you haven't found it yet.

Click Start, Control Panel, then 'Hardware and Sound' followed by Mouse under the 'Devices and Printers' heading. In the Mouse Properties dialogue box that appears, look for a tab that relates to your touchpad. A company called Synaptics (www.synaptics.com) is the biggest touchpad manufacturer, and the heading for its tab is Device Settings – so click that. To disable the touchpad entirely, click Disable followed by OK. To reverse this change later, just return here then click Enable.

Alternatively, you could adjust the touchpad's sensitivity so that it still works, but is far less likely to move the cursor after accidental taps and swipes. On the Device Settings tab, double-click the Settings tab and then click to expand the Pointing category, and then click to expand again to see the Sensitivity options. Now click Touch Sensitivity, and click and drag the slider toward Heavy Touch. Experiment to find the best setting for your setup.

NEXT ISSUE

ON SALE
8 July

- Why is File Explorer so slow?
- Can I access the Windows Store without a Microsoft account?
- Why does my mouse scroll wheel stop working?

...And many more

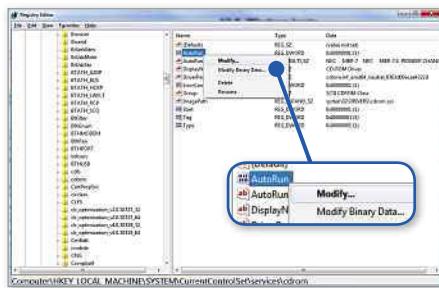
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VirtualBox

Guest OS doesn't respond to new CDs/DVDs

If you're using VirtualBox to run a guest operating system (OS), such as an older version of Windows, you may find it fails to recognise your optical (CD/DVD) drive. A quick Registry tweak should fix the problem. Back up the Registry first, by creating a [system restore point](#). Then, in your guest OS, type `regedit` into Start and press Enter to open Registry Editor. Navigate to `HKEY_LOCAL_MACHINE\System\CurrentControlSet\Services\cdrom`. Right-click AutoRun in the right-hand pane and choose Modify. Change the 'Value data' field to '1' and then restart the guest OS.



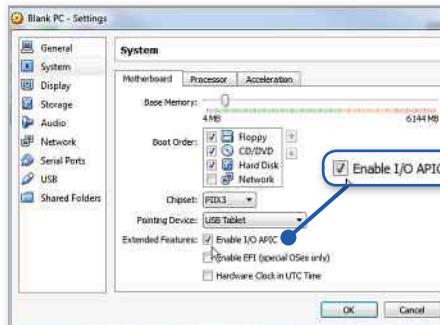
If a guest OS doesn't notice when a new CD or DVD is inserted, modify this Registry key

Unable to access BIOS settings

VirtualBox doesn't allow user access to the [BIOS](#) in the same way as a real PC, so tapping Delete or F2 when starting a virtual machine won't work. To access settings that you'd normally find in the BIOS, such as the drive boot order, right-click the virtual machine's name then choose Settings. Next, click System on the left-hand side, then select the Motherboard tab.

Can't install Linux in virtual machine

If all your attempts to set up a Linux guest OS using VirtualBox fail, first check the specifications of your host PC's processor by pressing Win+Pause/Break (the Pause/Break key is normally at the top-right of your keyboard). Linux can encounter problems on some older [CPUs](#), including AMD's Phenom or Opteron



Tick this box if you're having trouble setting up a Linux guest OS in VirtualBox

[processors](#), so if you've got one of these it could be thwarting your attempts to install the OS.

The solution is to enable a hardware-emulation feature called Advanced Programmable Interrupt Controllers (APIC). Before installing Linux, right-click the blank guest OS in VirtualBox and choose Settings. Now click System, select the Motherboard tab and tick 'Enable I/O APIC'. Click OK, and then install your Linux distribution.

No bootable medium found

A virtual machine displaying a 'FATAL. No bootable medium found. System halted' error message means it's unable to find a boot disc, such as a Windows installation CD/DVD. This typically means that an [ISO file](#) hasn't been attached to VirtualBox as a virtual drive. To do this, click Devices, followed by CD/DVD Devices, then click 'Choose a virtual CD/DVD disk file' and navigate to the ISO file.

If there's already a guest OS installed, then it could be an incorrect boot order (see 'Unable to access BIOS settings' tip). If this doesn't help, then the virtual drive may have become corrupt. Restore from a backup or delete the guest OS and start over.

Guest OS's time drifts out of sync

If a guest OS's clock loses time (running slow before suddenly catching up), a probable cause is a power-saving feature of modern processors known as C1E or

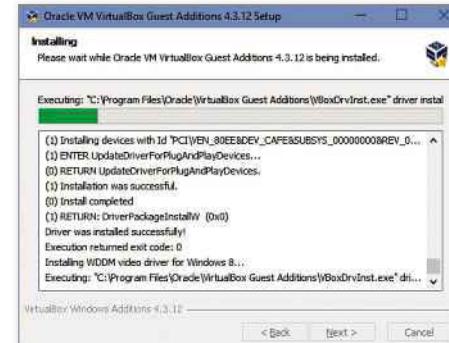
Wake up unresponsive DVD drives, restore transparency effects and keep clocks in sync

Enhanced Halt. This lets the processor save energy by taking breathers when little is happening – but it can play havoc with timekeeping. It's safe to disable and the additional energy costs are negligible.

So, access your host PC's BIOS then look for this option. With an older PC, access the BIOS (usually by tapping Delete or F2 after switching on). For newer Windows 8/8.1 PCs, press Win+C to open the Charms bar then click Settings followed by 'Change PC settings'. Next, click 'Update and recovery' followed by Recovery, then 'Restart now' under the 'Advanced startup' heading. Click Troubleshoot followed by 'Advanced options' and then UEFI Firmware Settings. Finally, click Restart to launch into the UEFI BIOS.

Transparency effects not working

A bug in some versions of VirtualBox's Guest Additions toolkit shuts off transparency effects in some editions of Windows. VirtualBox developer Oracle should eventually fix this, but meanwhile you can get around it by installing an older version of Guest Additions. Download 'VBoxGuestAdditions_4.3.12.iso' (www.snipca.com/16431), then start up the affected virtual PC and point to Devices, followed by CD/DVD Devices and then click 'Choose a virtual CD/DVD disk file'. Now navigate to the ISO file you just downloaded, click to select it and then follow the prompts to complete installation. When you've finished, reboot the virtual OS.



Installing an older version of Guest Additions will restore Windows' transparency effects



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No.363 Black 20ml	£6.99
No.363 C/M/Y/PC/M 6ml	£4.99
No.364 Black 10ml	£6.99
No.364 B/C/M/Y 5ml	£5.99

HP Originals

No.21 Black 5ml	£11.99
No.22 Colour 5ml	£14.99
No.38 Colours, each	£26.99
No.56 Black 19ml	£19.99
CLi521 B/C/M/Y/G 9ml	£9.99
PGi520 Black 19ml	£10.99
CLi526 B/C/M/Y/G 9ml	£9.99
PGi525 Black 19ml	£10.99
CLi526 B/C/M/Y/G 9ml	£9.99
PGi550 Black 15ml	£10.99
CLi551 B/C/M/Y/G 7ml	£8.99
PGi550/CLi551 set of 5	£42.99
PG40 Black 16ml	£14.99
PG50 Black 22ml	£21.99
PG510 Black 9ml	£11.99
CL511 Colour 9ml	£15.99
PG512 Black 15ml	£16.99
CL513 Colour 13ml	£20.99
PG540 Black 8ml	£11.99
CL541 Colour 8ml	£15.99
PG545 Black 8ml	£11.99
CL546 Colour 8ml	£13.99
KP-108IP Ink & Paper	£29.99

Brother Compatibles

LC970 / 1000 Black	£3.99
LC970 / 1000 C/M/Y	£2.99
LC970 / 1000 Set of 4	£11.99
LC980 / 1100 Black	£3.99
LC980 / 1100 C/M/Y	£2.99
LC980 / 1100 Set of 4	£11.99
LC985 Black	£3.99
LC985 C/M/Y	£2.99
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No.29 Colour	£12.99
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T026 Black	£39.99
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T029 Colour	£39.99
T030 Colour	£39.99
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T033 Colour	£39.99
T034 Colour	£39.99
T035 Colour	£39.99
T036 Colour	£39.99
T037 Colour	£39.99
T038 Colour	£39.99
T039 Colour	£39.99
T040 Colour	£39.99
T041 Colour	£39.99
T050 Black	£39.99
T051 Black	£36.99
T052 Colour	£36.99
T053 Colour	£36.99
T0441-4 Set of 4	£44.99
T0441-4 Set of 6	£19.99
T0481-6 Set of 6	£15.99
T0450-9 Set of 8	£109.99
T0450-9 Set of 8	£35.99
T0540 Gloss	£39.99
T0541-9 each	£24.99
T0554-1 Set of 4	£34.99
T0555 Black	£8.99
T0552-4 each	£26.99
T0591-9 Set of 8	£99.99
T0591-9 each	£12.99
T0611-4 Set of 4	£34.99
T0611-4 each	£14.99
T0612-4 each	£34.99
T0711-4 each	£34.99
T0791-6 each	£12.99
T0801-6 Set of 6	£51.99
T0870-9 Set of 8	£7.99
T0871-9 each	£7.99
T0961-9 Set of 8	£7.99
T1281-4 Set of 4	£29.99
T1281-4 each	£7.99
T1282-4 each	£7.99
T1291-4 Set of 4	£29.99
T1292-4 each	£7.99
T1571-9 each	£14.99
T5801-9 each	£14.99
No.16 Set of 4	£36.99
No.16 Black	£10.99
No.16 CMY	£10.99
No.24 Set of 6	£20.99
No.24 B/C/L/M, ea	£7.99
No.24 CMY, each	£7.99
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No.26 Black	£10.99
No.26 B/C/L/M, ea	£7.99
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SX255W/420W/425W/435W/445W, BX320W, BX325W, BX420W, BX425W, BX520W, BX525W, BX620W, BX720W, BX820W, BX920W, BX1020W, BX1050W, BX1150W, BX1250W, BX1350W, BX1450W, BX1550W, BX1650W, BX1750W, BX1850W, BX1950W, BX2050W, BX2

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Broadband Genie's helpline is powered by Simplify Digital, the Ofcom-accredited switching service

Jargon Buster

1080p Of the common types of high-definition video, this is the best quality: 1920x1080 pixels.

802.11n A standard for wireless networks that allows for high transfer speeds.

AMOLED Active-Matrix Organic Light-Emitting Diode. An alternative technology to LCD for creating flat-panel displays. Most commonly used in smartphones, tablets and smartwatches.

Audio loops A set musical pattern that repeats itself.

Beta A version of software that's being tested. Beta versions are often released so problems can be ironed out.

BIOS Basic Input-Output System. Essential software built into every PC that connects the vital components. It's visible for a few seconds when the PC starts.

Bus channel A target channel you send audio content to in music recording software. A bus channel helps you add effects such as reverb.

Cache A temporary space for storing information. Can be memory used on a computer processor, or space on a hard drive used by a web browser.

CPU Central Processing Unit. Another term for a computer processor.

CSC Compact system cameras. A camera that uses interchangeable lenses, but doesn't have a viewfinder that uses a mirror. Offers many of the benefits of a DSLR without the size and cost.

dpi Dots per inch. A measure of printed image quality, or the size an object will be shown on screen.

Driver A file that tells Windows how to work with a peripheral device.

DSLR Digital single lens reflex. A digital camera that uses a moving mirror so its viewfinder looks out through the lens. DSLRs use interchangeable lenses and large sensors for high-quality photos.

EPUB A file format used by many popular ebook readers. EPUB3 is an updated version of EPUB.

Ethernet A standard used for almost all wired computer networks.

EV Compensation Exposure Compensation. Cameras automatically try to pick the correct exposure, but sometimes you will need to override it with this control.

Exposure The amount of light collected by a camera's sensor.

FAT 32 A system for formatting hard disks used by Windows 98 and ME, and still used for some portable disks.

Firmware Basic software stored on a device, such as a music player, to control its operation. Can sometimes be upgraded in a process often called flashing.

GIF Graphics Interchange Format. A type of image file often used on the web, but now largely superseded by PNG.

Gigabit Ethernet A very fast networking standard that can transfer data at up to 1,000Mbps.

GPU Graphics Processor Unit. A chip designed to create 3D graphics, but which can also be used for other computing tasks.

ISO file A type of image file that contains all the data from a CD or DVD disc.

Megapixel A measure of the amount of detail that can be recorded by a digital image. A one-megapixel image is made up of a million dots (pixels).

Metadata A set of data that gives information about a file.

MHL Mobile high-definition link. A technology that lets you connect a smartphone or tablet to a TV for showing content, as well as charge its battery, using a cable.

Micro SDXC Secure Digital eXtended Capacity. A memory card format with a maximum capacity of 2TB, compared with a limit of 32GB for SDHC cards.

Micro USB A miniature version of USB, often found on smartphones, tablets and portable hard drives.

MIDI Musical Instrument Digital Interface. A standard that enables compatible electronic musical instruments to communicate with computers. Also refers to a file format used to store digital music.

Noise Visible dust-like speckles that appear in some camera and TV images. In photos, they are caused by the camera's own sensor. In TV images, they can be caused by the TV's processor or by a flaw in the broadcast signal itself.

Open source Software that can be modified by anyone, rather than just by the employees of the company that created it.

Overclocking Making a CPU work faster to improve performance at the cost of it getting hotter and requiring more power.

Partition A large hard drive can be split into two or more partitions or 'virtual' drives. Once partitioned, each section is treated by Windows as though it were a completely separate, smaller hard drive.

PCI slot Peripheral Component Interconnect. A high-performance expansion slot for desktop PCs, allowing simple installation of PCI components such as sound cards and modems.

Plug-in A small program that adds extra features to your web browser or to other applications, and is loaded only when it's needed.

Processor The processor – or central processing unit – is the brain of a computer. Processors now are tiny and are capable of carrying out millions of calculations every second.

PSU Power Supply Unit. The box that supplies power to the rest of your computer.

QuickTime A video file format developed by Apple.

Resolution The amount of detail shown in an image, whether on screen or printed.

RF loop-through Commonly associated with set-top boxes and video recorders. RF (Radio Frequency) means a TV signal is transmitted on a TV frequency (channel). A set-top box with an RF loopthrough has an 'in' and 'out' co-axial aerial socket, so that a TV signal can go into the box then come out again to feed another piece of equipment, such as a video recorder, regardless of whether the set-top box is switched on or off.

Safe Mode A way of starting Windows so that various programs and peripherals are prevented from working. This is useful to help diagnose the cause of problems if a computer is behaving oddly.

SATA Serial ATA. An interface for connecting modern hard drives and optical discs to a computer.

Sensor The part of the camera that captures each image. Analogous to film in a film camera.

Server A computer on a network, such as the internet, that distributes information to other PCs.

SIM Subscriber Identity Module. The smart card used by all digital mobile phones. The SIM card carries the user's identity and phone number for accessing the network.

SSD Solid-state drive. Storage that, unlike a hard drive, uses no moving parts. Faster but more expensive than conventional hard drives.

System Restore Point The collection of system files stored by System Restore on a given date and time to which Windows can revert if a problem occurs.

Two-factor authentication A system that uses two different means to identify the user. For example, a PIN in addition to a password.

USB 3.0 A faster version of the USB standard used to connect devices to a computer.

White balance Adjusts the balance of colours in the image to produce natural-looking images.

The Final Straw



STUART ANDREWS is
Computeractive's Mr Angry

This issue Stuart Andrews laments the damage caused by...

Online vandals

I'll admit to a childish chuckle when I first saw the image that forced Google to suspend editing in its Map Maker tool (www.google.co.uk/mapmaker). There, on the outskirts of Rawalpindi, Pakistan, was the Android robot, cheerfully relieving itself on the Apple logo (see it at www.snipca.com/16631). While I'm no fan of mindless vandalism online, it's the kind of thing that's easily removed. It's little more than the digital equivalent of the puerile images schoolboys used to scrawl with a compass on the underside of desks (apologies to Mr B at my old school whose portrait I unflatteringly captured).

I couldn't help sniggering when someone edited Eric Pickles' Wikipedia entry to suggest he's an egg-headed Doctor Who alien

Herculaneum and Pompeii is anything to go by. You could almost say that online vandals are continuing an ancient tradition.

These pranksters seem to be everywhere. Take Wikipedia, for example. Again, I couldn't help sniggering when someone edited the entry for the ex-Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, Eric Pickles, to suggest he's a Sontaran: one of the flabby, egg-headed aliens in Doctor Who (and there is a resemblance - www.snipca.com/16660).

Even online games aren't safe. In April last year, the Danes launched a replica of Denmark in the massively popular game Minecraft, hoping to help educate children about the cities and sights of their fine Nordic nation. Within weeks it had been partly decimated by smuggled dynamite, with several towns levelled completely. The Danes fixed everything back up and enhanced security, but not before someone had covered the place in American flags.

It's all harmless fun, right? Nobody gets hurt, and websites can quickly rectify the damage. Well, maybe, but like real-world vandalism it has serious consequences, such as the suspension of Google Map Maker - a tool that's intended to help local people add the details that matter to them to Google Maps. When Google launched Map Maker, it hoped that those using it would keep vandals at bay, operating like an online Neighbourhood Watch. But now they've had to step in and moderate it themselves. The result? A massive backlog.

I suspect Map Maker will be back and that Google will learn from it, just as Wikipedia learnt from the John Seigenthaler affair, where the respected American journalist was falsely accused of being a suspect in the assassinations of Jack and Bobby Kennedy (the hoax now has its own Wikipedia page: www.snipca.com/16661).

The other trigger for Google's decision was some wag labelling the White House as 'Edward's Snow Den' (a reference to the whistleblower who exposed the spying secrets of America's National Security Agency). This outbreak of web hooliganism may have a more political edge, but it's still the work of some smart-ass cocking a snook at the authorities. That's something which smart-asses have been doing since Roman times, if the graffiti at



www.snipca.com/16661). All the same, this kind of vandalism shows up a weakness in a lot of the thinking behind our brave new online world.

I've lost count of the times in recent years when I've heard companies spout on about community-led this and that. They always dream of a world where users provide content to augment or bolster apps and services and fill them with meaningful stuff. Yet, they forget that any community will have its share of bad apples - the people who are going to take those tools and features and use them to make something silly, vulgar, shocking or downright mean.

A community can include as many vandals as big-hearted volunteers, and as much anti-social behaviour as spirited enthusiasm. And what some guys do just for laughs, others will do for darker purposes. So I hate the way these childish online vandals spoil things for everyone else. But tech companies should remove their rose-tinted glasses, and start being more realistic about the flaws in any community-led website.

Do you agree with Stuart?
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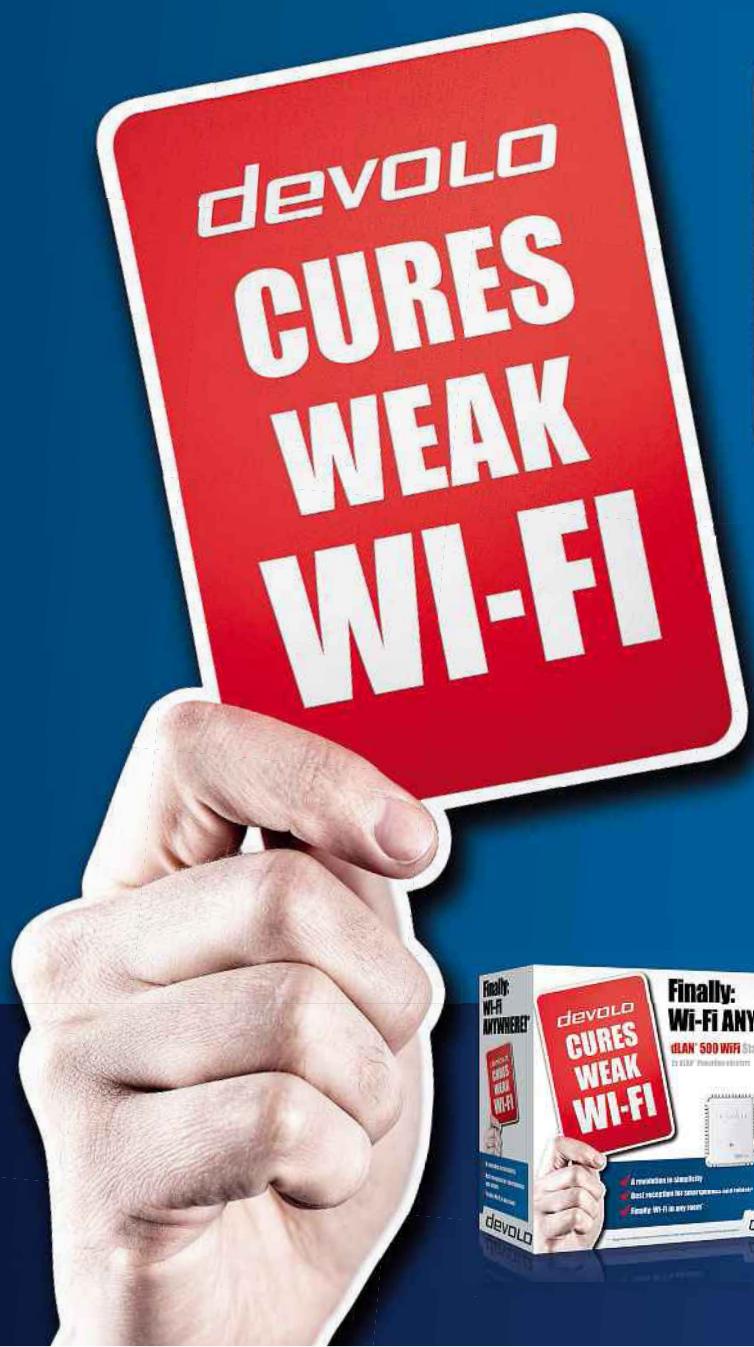


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